Hans Christian Andersen

The Little Mermaid

and

Other Tales

$19.95

The Little Mermaid
and
Other Tales

By Hans Christian Andersen
Translated by R. Nisbet Bain
Illustrated by J.R. Weguelin

". . . Andersen found himself standing, one evening, outside a little unpretentious but mysterious door, the door of Fairy-Tale; he touched it , it flew open, and he saw, sparkling inside there in the darkness, the little tinder-box which was to be his Aladdin's Lamp. He struck fire with it and the Spirits of the Lamp—the dogs with eyes like tea-cups, like mill-wheels and like the Round Tower—stood by him and brought him the three huge chests full of all the fairy copper money, silver money and gold money. The first fairy tale was there and it drew all the others after it. Happy the man who finds his right tinder-box!"

– from the Introduction by R. Nisbet Bain

Hippocrene Books is pleased to present this near replica of the first American edition of the stories of Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen, the great Danish master of fairy tales, has long been praised for writing stories that appeal directly to the child's fancy, and accommodate themselves to the child's point of view by animating and personifying creatures and things in the natural world.

Continued on the back flap

THE LITTLE MERMAID
AND OTHER TALES

THE LITTLE MERMAID AND OTHER TALES. BY HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN. TRANSLATED BY R. NISBET BAIN. ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. WEGUELIN

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE 1893 EDITION

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN was born at Odense in Funen on the 2nd of April, 1805. His father was a cobbler, a sensitive, dreamy, fanciful nature with a strong taste for reading and a passion for building castles in the air. Hans Christian was, in these respects, his father's own child, and his peculiarities, set off as they were by an odd gawkiness and an almost comical ugliness, made the morbidly self-conscious lad a fair butt for his humble comrades, whose natural impulse was to ridicule whatever they could not understand. Fortunately for his own happiness, his self-confidence was always in excess of his shyness, and in his fourteenth year, shortly after being confirmed, he set out to seek his fortune at the capital. Here, for a time, he led a sort of vagabond life, picking up a trifle here and there, as best he could, and sustained by the fixed idea that his universal genius was bound to succeed in the long run. The things he attempted seem almost incredible

in these matter-of-fact days. He danced figure dances before the most famous *danseuse* of the capital, who not unnaturally regarded the queer creature as an escaped lunatic; he sang arias before the director of the Copenhagen *Conservatoire*, who gave him singing lessons there till his voice broke; he wrote high-flown dramas which were unconscious plagiarisms of Oehlenschläger and Ingemann; he haunted the back-doors of theatres in hopes of being employed as a supernumerary, till, at last, the enlightened and sympathetic Jonas Collin, at that time manager of the Royal Theatre, took pity on him and represented his case to the King, who readily granted him a small pension, and sent him, free of charge, to the Latin School at Slagelse, about 12¼ Danish miles from Copenhagen. The pride of the sensitive hobbledehoy of eighteen must have suffered acutely when he took his place among the little urchins at the bottom of the lowest form at Slagelse School; but he seems to have suffered even more from the sarcasms of the rector, Simon Meisling, whose sense of the ridiculous was never disturbed by any charitable scruples. In 1826 Meisling was transferred to Elsinore, and with him Andersen quitted Slagelse—or Plagelse [1] as he preferred to call it, "not merely for the rhyme's sake," as he is careful to tell us. He lodged for a time with Meisling at Elsinore, but master and pupil never could hit it off together, and Andersen gladly took advantage of his friend Collin's offer to remove him to

[1] Plague.

Copenhagen, where his education was privately completed by the theologian Ludwig Christian Müller. It was at Elsinore that Andersen composed his first poem, "The Dying Child," which, with some others in Heine's manner, was printed in the celebrated *Flying Post* of Copenhagen. His first important work was the *Fodreise fra Holmens canal til Ostpynten af Amager Aarene*, 1828 *og* 1829 ("Tour on Foot from Holm's Canal to Amager, 1828-29"), a humorously fantastic itinerary, clearly written under the influence of Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücken*. Although superficial and pedantic, it is not without a delicate irony and some fine touches of that naïve childlike fancy which was one day to make the young author famous. The *Fodreise* was received with favour. Even such an Aristarchus as Heiberg wrote it up in the *Flying Post*. A comic vaudeville, entitled *Kjærlighed paa Nicolai Taarn* ("Love on Nicholas' Tower"), which appeared a couple of months later, was also successful. It was a smart parody on the high-flying, heroic dramas of the day and many began to see a future satirist of promise in the young author. But an unhappy love affair at this time, from which he never seems to have quite recovered, turned him aside from the affectation of cynicism which he had borrowed from Heine, and his next work, a collection of poems entitled *Phantasier og Skizzer* ("Fantasies and Sketches"), 1831, was the most natural thing he had yet written It

was now too, that he met with his first literary reverse. The great satirist Baggesen, in his famous polemical poem, *Gjengangeren* ("Spectre"), did not spare even Andersen, and the latter's irregular, defective prosody and frequent solecisms were hit off in the following stinging lines:

"Drunk with the thin small-beer of Fancy,
And mounted on Slagelsian Nancy,
The Muses' ancient, night-mare hack,
With drooping flanks and broken back,
Behold! Saint Andersen comes riding,
Whom the unlettered mob takes pride in.
They hold him—their applauses show it—
For quite a prophet of a poet!"

Such ridicule in the leading critical periodical of the day Andersen never could forget. His morbidly sensitive vanity always saw a deliberate insult, an irreparable calamity in the lightest, the mildest criticism, whilst even the grossest praise from the most incompetent admirers used to raise him into the seventh heaven of rapture. No man moreover was ever a worse judge of his own writings. He always regarded his latest, as his incomparably best work, and the childish enthusiasm with which he raved about his own favourite productions drew down upon him all manner of ridicule, which was so much torture to him. It was well for him that he had such an asylum at this time as the

Collins' house, where he was always treated as a member of the family, and within whose patriarchal walls his sickly fancies and morbid broodings were always met by wise remonstrance or good-humoured badinage. His frequent foreign tours moreover (he was as much a bird of passage as his prime favourite, the Stork) did much to take him out of himself. His first little excursion was made in 1831 to North Germany, and he has left us an account of it in the charming *Skyggebilder af en Reisen til Harzen* ("Silhouettes of a Journey to the Harz.") His second tour (1833), at the expense of the State, took in Germany, France, Switzerland and Italy. At Rome, where he lived on the most friendly terms with his literary opponent Hertz, and in daily intercourse with the Scandinavian artist colony, whose leading spirit was Thorvaldsen, he began his first novel, *Improvisatoren*, which was published in 1835. The hero, a young Improvisatore who fights his way to the front in the face of adverse circumstances and unjust neglect, is transparently the author himself, and the same may be said of the heroes of the subsequent novels, *O. T.* (1836) and *Kun en Spillemand* 1837 ("Only a Fiddler"). All three romances show Andersen at his best and at his worst. What we may call the scaffolding of the story, the descriptions of nature, the impressions of travel, the humorous episodes, and the fanciful observations of men and things are admirable; but the characterisation is generally feeble and the

exalted sensitiveness and omnipresent egotism of the author are disturbing elements.

A few months after the appearance of *Improvisatoren*, Andersen had published a little volume of tales for children containing "The Tinder-box," "Little Claus and Big Claus," "The Princess on the Pea" and "Little Ida's Flowers," which was to be the foundation of his future fame. "After a long fumbling about," a great critic has finely said,[1] "after many years of aimless wandering . . . . Andersen found himself standing, one evening, outside a little unpretentious but mysterious door, the door of Fairy-Tale; he touched it, it flew open, and he saw, sparkling inside there in the darkness, the little tinder-box which was to be his Aladdin's lamp. He struck fire with it and the Spirits of the Lamp—the dogs with the eyes like tea-cups, like mill-wheels, and like the Round Tower—stood by him and brought him the three huge chests full of all the fairy copper money, silver money and gold money. The first fairy tale was there and it drew all the others after it. Happy the man who finds his right tinder-box!"

"I have begun upon some tales as told to children," wrote Andersen on this occasion to a friend, "and I fancy I have succeeded. I have given [the public] a copy of the fairy tales which used to please me when I was little and which are not known, I think. I have written them just as if I were telling them to a child." It is

[1] G. Brandes: *Kritiker og Portraiter.*

remarkable that Andersen should from the very first have so closely set before him what was to be the essential peculiarity of his fairy tales distinguishing them sharply from all others. All previous fairy tales had been *written for* children, his were *told to* them. His tales appealed directly to the childish fancy, they accommodated themselves absolutely to the child's point of view, to that faculty of childhood which animates and personifies everything in nature. That this was the right way to tell a fairy-tale there can be no doubt, but its very novelty struck the public at first as odd and eccentric. People thought them rather childish than childlike—"*un peu trop enfantin*," perhaps, as Professor Brandes' young Frenchman considered them—and so far as they were noticed by the press at all, they were noticed unfavourably. Only a single eye saw more deeply into the matter, but that eye happened to be the clearest in Denmark. Hans Christian Örsted assured Andersen that while the *Improvisatoren* would make him famous, the fairy tales would make him immortal. "They are," said Örsted, "the most perfect things you have yet written." The readily impressionable Andersen, however, was at first rather inclined to believe the verdict of the Public. He regarded "the little fairy tales," he said, as "a juggler's sleight of hand with Fancy's golden apples." He meant to make his reputation by "greater works." The first modest collection of fairy tales was, nevertheless regularly followed by subsequent little companion volumes, the public gradually got to like them, and

its respect for them increased vastly when the actors at the Royal Theatre condescended to recite them from the stage.

These "greater works" which chiefly occupied Andersen at the time of the appearance of the first fairy tales were, besides the novels already mentioned, the romantic drama, *The Mulatto* and the tragedy *The Moorish Girl* (1840), both of which were applauded indeed by playgoers, but fiercely assailed by the critics. Heiberg in his Aristophanic comedy, *A Soul after Death*, placed both plays in the repertoire of Triviality in Hell, and his satiric lash drove the smarting dramatist away from Denmark again. This time Andersen visited Germany, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Hungary, subsequently describing his impressions in the exquisite little collection of tales and sketches *En Digters Bazar* ("A Poet's Bazar"), 1842. Fresh tours to Paris and North Germany quickly followed, while in the summer-time, Andersen usually stayed, a welcome guest, at the country houses of the gentry in Zealand and Funen. He was also frequently a guest of King Christian VIII. at Föhr. In 1846 he produced his one good comedy, *Den nye Barselstue* ("The New Lying-in Room"), in Holberg's vein, which appeared anonymously and was enthusiastically applauded by critics and public alike. Much less successful were his epic poem *Ahasuerus*, an aphoristic series of historical tableaux from the birth of Christ to the discovery of America (1848), and his romance, *The Two Baronesses* (1849). From 1850 to the end of his life Andersen

was constantly on the move, scouring Europe from north to south and from east to west, venturing even to Barbary, and only prevented from accepting an invitation to America for fear of crossing the ocean, especially as a dear lady friend of his had predicted his death on the other side under mysteriously terrifying circumstances.

Andersen celebrated his fiftieth birthday by publishing (1855) *Mit Livs Eventyr* ("The Story of My Life"), perhaps the most subjective autobiography ever written. This work, with its subsequent supplements and his correspondence, edited three years after his death by Bille and Bögh, are the documents upon which his future biographer (for he has not yet found one) must mainly depend. In the latter years of his life, Andersen dabbled in metaphysics to the decided detriment of his literary reputation. The last and worst of his novels, *At være eller ikke være* ("To Be or Not to Be"), is an ambitious attempt to combat the materialistic view of life and "reconcile Nature and the Bible." Andersen, with his usual enthusiasm for his latest production, confidently expected that this work would completely revolutionise modern thought, but it fell flat. Some of the later fairy tales also suffer slightly from the author's well-meaning but mistaken efforts to settle the most difficult problems of life on purely speculative grounds.

In 1875, on the occasion of Andersen's seventieth birthday, his

beautiful *Story of a Mother* was published in fifteen languages at Copenhagen. Andersen was now as full of honours as of years. All his youthful ambitions had been more than gratified. He had a distinguished title and no end of orders of knighthood, both native and foreign; he was the personal friend of his sovereign and the darling of the people; he had obtained the freedom of his native city, and finally had the unusual but not unpleasant experience of sitting for the statue which was to be raised to him in the capital. His joy on this occasion was, however, considerably dashed because the sculptor had, in the first instance, represented him surrounded by a group of listening children against which appendage he protested with whimsical but characteristic vehemence. "Not one of the sculptors," he complains, "seems to know that I never *could* tell tales whenever anyone is sitting behind me, or close up to me, still less when I have children in my lap, or on my back, or young Copenhageners leaning right against me. To call me 'the children's poet' is a mere figure of speech. My aim has always been to be the poet of elder people of all sorts: children alone cannot represent me." Nevertheless it is as the children's poet that Andersen has now his truest and most enduring fame. His dramatic works are forgotten; his poems are unimportant; his novels never read; but his fairy tales will live as long as there is such a thing as Literature at all. Andersen died on the 4th August, 1875, at his country house, "Rolighed," near Copenhagen, surrounded by loving and sorrowing

friends. Despite his weaknesses and peculiarities he was beloved as few have been.

The ideal translation of the fairy tales is Victor Rydberg's monumental version, but that it should be so, was, apart from the peculiar genius of the translator, only to be expected considering that the idioms of the two Scandinavian languages are almost identical. Some of the German translations are also very good. In no country, however, is Andersen so well known and so highly appreciated as in England, though here, unfortunately, he has not been very happy in his translators. Omitting school editions and minor selections, there are, roughly speaking, ten English versions and of these (taking them, as far as possible, by order of merit) the earliest is still, on the whole and as far as it goes, the best. We allude, of course, to the ten tales translated by Mrs. Howitt (*Wonderful Tales*, 1846). Mrs. Howitt's Danish is miserably faulty; occasionally she commits blunders which would be the ruin of the average translator now-a-days;[1] but nobody ever caught the *spirit* of Andersen as she has done; she is both loyally literal and fearlessly free as occasion demands; while her masterly rendering of those extremely difficult nonsense rhymes in "Ole Lukøie" beginning: "*Vor Sang skall komme som en Vind*," is an unapproachable model for all future translators. Another excellent

[1] *e.g.* In "Ole Lukøie," "der gjorde cour til" is translated "who *cured*," instead of "who *courted*." The word *cour* might have suggested that this was one of Andersen's frequent Gallicisms, *i.e.* "*faisait la cour à*."

minor collection (it consists of but *eight* of the best stories) is the beautifully printed and gorgeously illustrated 4to of 1872 (Sampson Low), by H. L. D. Ward and A. Plesner. Their knowledge of Danish, though not always above reproach; is more thorough than Mrs. Howitt's; but their English, though very good, is somewhat tawdry beside hers, and, where comparison is possible, we in nine cases out of ten prefer the language of the modest little 16mo of 1846 to the language of its magnificent successor. By far the ablest of the larger collections is certainly Madame de Chatelain's translation (Routledge, 1852). This lady, who had considerable experience as a translator, is scrupulously exact and painstaking; her English too, is pure and simple, and her knowledge of Danish much more intimate than that of any other of Andersen's translators. All the remaining English versions of Andersen are distinctly inferior to the first three. Least irritating, perhaps, are the numerous and well-known versions of Mr. Dulcken, to whom the British public owes its first *complete* Andersen. Mr. Dulcken evidently knows Danish very well, though his slavish literalness constantly reminds us of the fact that we are reading a translation. His English also leaves very much to be desired. Still less can we commend the English of Mr. Sievert's version (Sampson Low, 1887). Even when accurate (and he is generally accurate) he repeatedly vulgarises his original, and not infrequently both

garbles the more difficult and debases the more beautiful passages. I am also inclined to think, from internal evidence, that he owes something to Rydberg's Swedish version. Of Mrs. Paull's version (Warne, 1882) we can only say that it is feebly accurate and wildly slipshod. The humour of Andersen, always his strong point, is frequently missed altogether; but the translator compensates us somewhat by an unconscious humour of her own, especially remarkable in her notes, which reveal a perfect genius for blundering. The numerous anonymous versions published by Messrs. Ward, Lock and Co. are fairly correct, but their English is, generally speaking, wooden and wayward. Nevertheless they are preferable to the translations (1846, 1852, Bohn) for which Miss Peachey is responsible. Other translators may misunderstand and therefore misinterpret their Andersen: Miss Peachey presumes to beautify and even bowdlerise him. In "The Tinder-Box," the dog that had the gold is expanded into "the monstrous guardian of the golden treasure." The soldier, who, by the way, puts up not at an inn, but at a *hotel*, is so modest that he "kneels down and kisses the Princess's *hand*." This will be news to Andersen's admirers. We remember that the Queen, in the same story, is described as a wise woman who "could do something more than ride in a coach." Miss Peachey is careful to add, "and look very grand and condescending." Four adjectives suffice Andersen for describing the little match-girl's grandmother: Miss Peachey requires three sentences. Mr. Wehnert,

however (Bell, 1869), is still more presumptuous, for his fondness for big words goes hand-in-hand with a perfect mania for moralising. Andersen himself would scarcely recognise "The Wild Swans" when it emerges from beneath Mr. Wehnert's deforming pen. The heroine, poor Elisa, to take but a few instances, leans against the stump of a tree "*which in all probability had been destroyed by lightning.*" When she plaits her hair it is "*simply but prettily.*" When her elder brother tells her they must all fly away on the morrow, "the other ten confirmed these words *with evident emotion.*" Elisa puts her trust not in "God" but in "the *Ruler of the destinies of man*"—all the italicised words being of course gratuitous embellishments of the translator. The *ne plus ultra* of pretentious pedantry, however, is reached by Mr. Gardiner (Heywood, 1889), who takes unheard-of liberties with his text; devotes a note of ten lines to prove that the boots which the old Court lady in "The Tinder-Box" wore were goloshes, and substitutes the name Ludvig for that of Hjalmar in "Ole Lukøie," "as conveying the general idea of the original; and also because a foreign name better suits the spirit of the story."

It seems strange at first sight, that most of the English versions of Andersen should be so inadequate, for Andersen is, on the whole, anything but a difficult writer. We may go further, and say that no writer of equal genius can bear to be so literally translated into English as he. His meaning is, generally, transparently ob-

vious and his Danish is perfectly simple and straightforward. It is never paradoxical like Kiekegaard's, or elusively subtle like Jacobsen's, or obscurely concentrated like Ibsen's and Björnson's. How is it then that he has fared so ill at the hands of his English translators? The reason seems to me a want of reverence on their part, a feeling that he was, after all, a mere teller of fairy tales, of trifles which might be Englished anyhow and by anybody. Translators who approach the great Dane in such a profane spirit are bound to fail. They have no sense for the quaint conceits, the delicate nuances, the child-like *naïveté* and the lightsome bird-like humour which are of the very essence of his simple but unique art. They must become children again themselves before they can hope to understand him.

R. NISBET BAIN.
1893

HANS ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES.

THE LITTLE MERMAID.

("The Little Mermaid," written in 1836, "Thumbelisa," and "Little Ida's Flowers" were the first *original* stories that Andersen wrote. The immortal "Tinder-Box" is a good old nursery-tale re-told as only Andersen could re-tell it.)

FAR out in the sea the water is as blue as the leaves of the loveliest cornflower and as clear as the purest glass, but it is very deep, deeper than ever anchor yet reached; many church-towers would have to be piled one on the top of the other to reach right up from the bottom to the surface of the water. Down there dwell the Sea-folk. Now you must by no means fancy that there is nothing there but a bare white sandbank; no, the most wondrous trees and plants grow there, the stalks and leaves of which are so supple that they move to and fro at the least motion of the water, just as if they were living beings. All the fish, small and great, dart about among the branches just as the birds do in the air up here. In the deepest spot of all lies the Sea-King's palace. The walls are of coral and the long, pointed windows of the clearest sort of amber, but the roof is of mussel-shells which open and shut according as the water flows; it looks lovely, for in every one of the shells lies a glistening pearl. Any one of these pearls would be the glory of a Queen's crown.

The Sea-King down there had been a widower for many years, but his old mother kept house for him; she was a wise woman, but proud of her noble birth, and that was why she always went about with twelve oysters on her tail, the other notabilities being only allowed to carry six. Nevertheless she was very popular, especially because she doated upon the little sea-princesses, her grand-daughters. They were six pretty children, but the youngest was the loveliest of them all; her skin was as delicately tinted as a rose leaf, her eyes as blue as the deepest lake, but, like all the others, she had no feet, her body ended in a fish's tail. The livelong day they used to play in the palace down there in the great saloon where living flowers grew out of the walls. The large amber windows were opened and so the fishes swam into them just as the swallows fly in to us when we open our windows, but the fishes swam right up to the little princesses, ate out of their hands and let themselves be patted.

Outside the palace was a large garden full of blood-red and dark blue trees; the fruits there shone like gold, and the flowers like burning fire, and the stalks and leaves were always moving to and fro. The soil itself was of the finest sand, but as blue as sulphur-flames. A wondrous blue gleam lay over everything down there; one would be more inclined to fancy that one stood high up in the air and saw nothing but sky above and beneath than that one was at the bottom of the sea. During a calm, too, one could catch a glimpse of the sun; it looked like a purple flower from the cup of which all light streamed forth.

Every one of the little princesses had her own little garden-plot where she could dig and plant as she liked; one gave her

flower-plot the form of a whale, another preferred hers to look like a little mermaid, but the youngest made hers quite round like the sun and would only have flowers which shone red like it. She was a strange child, silent and pensive, and when the other sisters adorned their gardens with the strangest things which they got from stranded vessels, all that she would have, besides the rosy-red flowers which resembled the sun up above, was a pretty marble statue of a lovely boy, hewn out of bright white stone, which had sunk to the bottom of the sea during a shipwreck. She planted by this statue a rosy-red weeping willow, it grew splendidly and hung over the statue with its fresh branches, right down towards the blue sandy bottom where the shadows took a violet hue and moved to and fro like the branches; it looked as if roots and tree-top were playing at kissing each other.

Her greatest joy was to hear about the world of mankind up above. She made her old grandmother tell her all she knew about ships and towns, men and beasts; and what especially struck her as wonderfully nice was that the flowers which grew upon the earth should give forth fragrance, which they did *not* do at the bottom of the sea; and that the woods there were green and the fish which were to be seen there among the branches could sing so loudly and beautifully that it was a joy to listen to them; it was the little birds that her grandmother called *fishes*, they would not otherwise have understood her, for they had never seen a bird

"When you have reached your fifteenth year," said her grandmother, "you shall have leave to duck up out of the sea and sit in the moonshine on the rocks and see the big ships which sail by; woods and cities you shall also see."

In the following year one of the sisters would be fifteen years old, but how about the others? Each one was a year younger than the one before, and so the youngest had to wait five whole years before she could come up from the bottom of the sea and see how things are with us. But each one had promised to tell the others what she had seen and what she had thought the loveliest on the

first day; for their grandmother did not tell them half enough, there was so much they wanted to know about.

None of them was so full of longing as the youngest, just the very one who had the longest time to wait and was so silent and pensive. Many a time she stood by the open window and looked up through the dark blue water where the fishes steered about with their fins and tails. She could see the moon and stars; of course, they shone quite faintly, but at the same time they looked twice as

large through the water as they look to us, and when something like a dark cloud glided across them, she knew that it was either a whale swimming over them, or else a ship with many people on board; they certainly never dreamt that a pretty little mermaid stood down below and stretched her white arms up towards the keel.

And now the eldest princess was fifteen years old and might ascend to the surface of the water. When she came back she had hundreds of things to tell about, but the nicest of all, she said, was to lie in the moonshine on a sandbank in the calm sea, and see, close by the shore, the large town where the lights were twinkling, like hundreds of stars, and hear the music and the noise and bustle of carts and men, and look at the many church towers and spires, and hear the bells ringing; it was just because she could not go ashore that she longed so for all these things.

Oh! how the youngest sister listened, and ever afterwards, when she stood in the evening close by the open window, and looked up through the dark blue water, she thought of the great city with all its noise and bustle, and then she thought she heard the church bells ringing down where she was.

The next year the second sister got leave to mount up through the water and swim where she liked. She ducked up just as the sun was going down and she thought that the prettiest sight of all. The whole sky had looked like gold, she said, and the clouds—well, their beauty she absolutely could not describe. All red and violet they had sailed right over her; but far quicker than they, a flock of wild swans had flown right over the place where the sun stood, like a long white veil; she also swam towards the sun, but it sank; and

the rosy gleam it left behind it was swallowed up by the sea and the clouds.

A year after that the third sister came up to the surface; she was the boldest of them all, so she swam up a broad river which ran into the sea. She saw pretty green hillocks with vines around them, castles and country houses peeped forth from among the

woods; she heard all the birds singing and the sun shone so hotly that she frequently had to duck down under the water to cool her burning face. In a little creek she came upon a whole swarm of human children; they were running about quite naked and splashing about in the water. She wanted to play with them but they ran away in terror, and a little black beast came up. It was a dog, but

she had never seen a dog before; it barked so savagely at her that she got frightened and sought the open sea again, but never could she forget the splendid woods, the green heights and the pretty children who could swim in the water although they had no fishes' tails.

The fourth sister was not so bold; she remained out in the middle of the wild sea and said that that was the nicest of all; you could see for miles and miles round about, and the sky above stood there just like a large glass bell. Ships she had seen too, but far away they looked like sea-mews; the merry dolphins had turned somersaults and the big whales had spirted water up out of their nostrils, so that it looked like hundreds of fountains playing all around.

And now it was the turn of the fifth sister. Her birthday happened to be in the winter time, and therefore she saw what the others had not seen the first time. The sea took quite a green colour and round about swam huge icebergs; each one looked like a pearl, she said, and yet was far larger than the church towers which men build. They showed themselves in the strangest shapes and gleamed like diamonds. She had sat upon one of the largest, and all vessels had cruised far out of their reach in terror while she sat there and let the blast flutter her long streaming hair; but towards evening the sky was overcast with clouds, it thundered and lightened while the black sea lifted the large ice-blocks high up and let them shine in the strong glare of the lightning. On all the ships they took in the sails; distress and horror were there, but she sat calmly on her swimming iceberg and saw the blue thunderbolts strike down in zigzags into the shining sea.

The first time any of the sisters rose to the surface of the water she was always enraptured at the new and beautiful things she saw, but when they now, as grown-up girls, had leave to go up whenever they chose, they became quite indifferent about it; they longed for home, and in about a month's time or so would say that it was nicest of all down below, for there one felt so thoroughly at home.

Very often in the evenings the five sisters would take each other's arms and mount up in a group to the surface of the water; they had nice voices, sweeter than any human voice, and when it was blowing a gale and they had good reason to believe that a ship might be lost, they would swim before that ship and sing so sweetly of how pleasant it was at the bottom of the sea, and bid the sailors not be afraid to come down. But the sailors could not understand their words. They fancied it was the storm, nor did they ever get to see any of the beautiful things down below, for when the ship sank the crew were drowned and only came as dead men to the Sea-King's palace.

Now when her sisters thus ascended, arm in arm, high up through the sea, the little sister would remain behind all alone and look up after them, and she felt as if she must cry; but the mermaid has no tears and so she suffers all the more.

"Oh, if only I were fifteen years old!" said she. "I know that I shall quite get to love the world up above there and the men who live and dwell there."

And at last she was fifteen years old.

"Well, now at last we have *you* off our hands," said her grandmother, the old Queen Dowager. "Come here and let me

make you look nice like your sisters," and she placed a wreath of white lilies on her hair, but every petal in every flower was the half of a pearl, and the old lady made eight large oysters cling fast on to the Princess's tail to show her high rank.

"But it hurts me so!" said the little mermaid.

"Yes, one must suffer a little for the sake of appearances," said the old lady.

Oh, how much she would have liked to have torn off all this finery and laid aside her heavy wreath, the little red flowers from her garden suited her much better; but she dared not do it. "Farewell!" she said and mounted, light and bright as a bubble, up through the water.

The sun had just gone down as she lifted her head above the sea, but all the clouds were still shining like roses and gold, and in the midst of the pale pink sky sparkled the evening star, so clear and lovely. The air was mild and fresh and the sea as still as a mirror. A black ship with three masts lay upon it, only a single sail was up, for not a breath of wind was stirring and the sailors were sprawling all about on the masts and rigging. Music and singing were going on, and as the evening grew darker hundreds of variegated lamps were lit; it looked as if the flags of all nations were waving in the air. The little mermaid swam right up to the cabin window and every time the water raised her in the air she could look in through the mirror-bright panes where so many stylishly-dressed people were standing. The handsomest of them all was certainly the young Prince with the large black eyes (he could not have been more than sixteen years old); it was his birthday and that was why they were making all this display. The sailors were dancing upon the deck,

and when the young Prince stepped out, more than a hundred rockets rose into the air; they shone as bright as day, so that the little mermaid was quite frightened and ducked down beneath the water, but she soon stuck up her head again and then it was as if all the stars of heaven were falling down to her. Never had she seen such fire-works. Large suns whizzed round and round, splendid fiery fish swung about in the blue air, and everything was reflected back from the clear, calm sea. On the ship itself it was so light that you could see every little rope and spar, to say nothing of the men. But oh! how lovely the young Prince was, and how he pressed people's hands and laughed and smiled while the music sounded through the lovely night.

It grew late, but the little mermaid could not tear her eyes away from the ship and the handsome Prince. The variegated lights were put out. No more rockets rose into the air, no more salvos were fired, but deep down in the sea there was a murmuring and a roaring. She meanwhile sat upon the water and rocked up and down with it so that she could look into the cabin. But the ship now took a swifter course, one sail spread out after the other, the roll of the billows grew stronger, it lightened far away. Oh! there will be a frightful storm, that is why the sailors are now reefing the sails. The huge ship rocked to and fro as it flew along the wild ocean; the water rose like big black mountains, which would roll right over the masts, but the ship ducked like a swan down among the lofty billows and let herself be lifted up again on the towering water. The little mermaid thought it rich sport, but not so the sailors; the ship strained and cracked, the thick planks bent at the violent shock of the sea, the mast snapped

right in the middle like a reed, and the ship heeled over on her side while the water rushed into the cabin. And now the little mermaid saw that they were in danger, she herself had to beware of the spars and wreckage of the ship which drove along upon the water. For a moment it was so pitch dark that she could see nothing at all, but when it lightened it was bright enough for

her to see everything on the ship. Everybody there was tumbling about anyhow. She looked out for the young Prince especially and she saw him, when the ship went to pieces, sink down into the deep sea. She immediately became quite delighted, for now he would come down to her, but then it occurred to her that men cannot live in the water and that it was only as a corpse that he could reach

her father's palace. Die he must not, oh no; and so she swam among the spars and planks which were drifting about on the sea, quite forgetting that they might have crushed her, ducked down beneath the water and rose aloft again on the billows; and so, at last, she came up to the young Prince, who could scarcely swim a bit more in the raging sea. His arms and legs began to fail him, his beautiful eyes closed, he must have died if the little mermaid had not come up. She held his head above the water and let the billows drive him and her wherever they listed.

When morning dawned the storm had passed away, but not a fragment of the ship was to be seen. The sun rose so red and shining above the water, it seemed as if the Prince's cheeks regained the hue of life, but his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his lofty handsome brow and stroked back his wet locks. He looked just like the marble statue down in her little garden; she kissed him again and wished that he might live.

And now she saw in front of her the mainland, the lofty blue mountains, on the summits of which the snow shone as if it were swans that lay there; down on the shore were lovely green woods and right in front lay a church or cloister, she did not exactly know what it was, but it was a building of some sort. Lemon and oranges trees grew in the garden there, and in front of the gate stood tall palm-trees. The sea formed a little creek here, it was quite calm but very deep, right up to the very cliff where the sea had washed up the fine white sand; thither she swam with the handsome Prince and laid him on the sand, taking particular care that his head should lie high in the warm sunshine.

And now the bells in the large white building fell a-ringing, and a number of young girls came walking through the garden. Then the little mermaid swam further out behind some lofty rocks which towered up out of the water, laid sea foam on her hair and breast that no one might see her face, and watched to see who would come to the poor Prince.

It was not very long before a young girl came by that way; she appeared quite frightened when she saw him, but only for a moment. Then she went and brought a lot of people, and the mermaid saw that the Prince came to life again, and smiled on all around him, but he did not send a smile to her, for of course he did not know that she had saved him. She felt so grieved that when he was carried away into the large building she ducked down under the water full of sorrow and sought her father's palace.

She had always been silent and pensive, but now she became still more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen up there the first time, but she told them nothing. Many a morning and many an evening she ascended to the spot where she had seen the Prince. She saw how the fruits of the garden ripened and were plucked, she saw how the snow melted upon the lofty mountains, but the Prince she did not see, and therefore she returned home more and more sorrowful every time. Her only consolation was to sit in the little garden and wind her arms round the pretty marble statue which was so like the Prince. But she did not attend to her flowers at all; they grew as if in a wilderness right over the paths and wreathed their long stalks and leaves among the branches of the trees till it was

quite gloomy there. At last she could endure it no longer, but told it to one of her sisters, and so all the others immediately got to know about it; but no one else knew it save they and a couple of other mermaids, who told it to nobody but their closest friends. One of these knew who the Prince was and all about him; she had also seen the merry-making on board the ship and knew whence he was and where his kingdom lay.

"Come, little sister!" said the other Princesses, and with their arms around each other's shoulders, they rose in a long row above the water in the place where they knew the Prince's palace lay. This palace was built of a light yellow glistening sort of stone with large marble staircases, one of which went straight down into the sea. Gorgeous gilded cupolas rose above the roof, and between the columns, which went round about the whole building, stood marble statues which looked like living beings. Through the clear glass in the lofty windows you looked into magnificent rooms hung with costly silk curtains and tapestries, and all the walls were adorned with large pictures, so that it was quite a pleasure to look at them. In the midst of the largest room plashed a large fountain, the water-jets rose high into the air towards the glass cupola, through which the sun shone upon the water and upon the beautiful plants which grew in the huge basin.

So now she knew where he dwelt, and many an evening and night she rose upon the water there. She swam much nearer to the land than any of the others had ventured to do; nay, she went right up the narrow canal, beneath the magnificent marble balcony which cast a long shadow across the water. Here she

used to sit and look at the young Prince, who fancied he was quite alone in the bright moonshine.

Many an evening she saw him sail with music in his splendid boat where the banners waved; she peeped forth from the green rushes, and when the wind played with her long silvery white veil and people saw it, they fancied it was a swan lifting its wings.

Many a night when the fishermen were fishing by torch-light on the sea, she heard them speaking so well of the young Prince, and she was glad that she had saved his life when he was drifting half dead upon the billows, and she thought how fast his head had rested on her breast, and how ardently she then had kissed him; he knew nothing at all about it, he could not even dream about her.

And so she got to love mankind more and more, more and more she desired to be among them. Their world seemed to her far grander than her own; why, they could fly across the sea in ships, ascend the lofty mountains high above the clouds, and the lands they called their own extended with their woods and meadows farther than her eye could reach. There was so much she would have liked to know, but her sisters would not answer everything she asked, and therefore she asked her old grandmother, for she knew all about the upper world, which she very correctly called the lands above the sea.

"When men don't drown," asked the little mermaid, "can they live for ever? Don't they die as we do down in the sea here?"

"Yes," said the old grandmother, "they also must die; and indeed their life is even shorter than ours. We can last for three

hundred years, but when at last we do cease to be, we become mere foam upon the water, we have not even a grave down here among our dear ones. We have no immortal soul; we never live again; we are like the green rushes, if once they be cut down, they cannot grow green again. Men, on the other hand, have souls which always live—live when the body has become earth; they rise up through the clear air, right up to the shining stars; just as we duck up out of the sea and see the lands of men, so they mount up to beautiful unknown places of which we shall never catch a glimpse."

"Why have not we got an immortal soul?" said the little mermaid sorrowfully. "I would give all the hundreds of years I have to live to be a human being but for a single day that so I might have my portion in the world above the sky!"

"You must not bother your head about that!" said the old grandmother, "we have a much better and happier lot than mankind up there."

"So I am to die and scud away like foam upon the sea, hear no more the music of the billows, see no more the pretty flowers and the red sun. Can I then do nothing at all to win an immortal soul?"

"No!" said the old grandmother, "only, if a man got to love thee so dearly that thou wert more to him than father or mother, if he clave to thee with all his heart and soul, and let the priest lay his right hand in thine and vow fidelity to thee here and in all eternity, then his soul would flow over into thy body and thou wouldst have thy portion of human bliss. He would have given thee a soul, and yet have kept his own. But

that can never be! The very thing that is so pretty in the sea here, thy fish's tail, is looked upon as hideous upon earth; they don't know any better. Up there one must have a couple of clumsy columns called feet to be thought handsome!"

Then the little mermaid sighed and looked sorrowfully at her fish's tail.

"Let us be content with our lot," said the old grandmother, "we'll hop and skip about to our hearts' content in the three hundred years we have to live in. Upon my word we have a nice long time of it, and after it is all over one can rest all the more contentedly in one's grave.[1] We'll have a court ball this very evening!"

And indeed it was a gorgeous sight such as one never sees on earth. The walls and ceiling of the vast dancing-hall were of glass, thick but clear. Many hundreds of colossal shells, rosy red and grass-green, stood in rows on each side full of a blue blazing fire which lit up the whole saloon and shone right through the walls so that the sea beyond them was quite illuminated. You could see all the countless fishes, both small and great, swimming towards the glass walls; the shells of some of them shone purple red, the shells of others seemed like gold and silver. In the midst of the saloon flowed a broad running stream, and on this danced the mermen and the mermaids to their own pretty songs. Such lovely voices are unknown on earth. The little mermaid sang sweetest of them all and they clapped her loudly, and for a moment her heart was glad, for she knew that

[1] The old grandmother's memory here played her false. She forgot that there are no graves at the bottom of the sea.

she had the loveliest voice of all creatures on the earth or in the sea. But very soon she began once more to think of the world above her; she could not forget the handsome Prince and her sorrow at not possessing, like him, an immortal soul. So she stole quietly out of her father's palace, and while everything there was mirth and melody, she sat full of sorrow in her little garden. Then she heard the bugle-horn ringing down through the water and she thought, "Now I know *he* is sailing up there, *he* whom I love more than father or mother, he to whom the thoughts of my heart cleave and in whose hands I would willingly lay my life's happiness. Everything will I venture to win him and an immortal soul! While my sisters are dancing within my father's palace, I will go to the sea-witch; I have always been frightened of her, but she, perchance, may help and counsel me."

So the little mermaid went out of her own sea right towards the raging whirlpool behind which the witch dwelt. She had never gone that way before. No flowers, no sea-grasses grew there, only the bare grey sandy bottom stretched out towards the whirlpools where the water, like a rushing mill-wheel, whirled round and round, tearing everything it caught hold of away with it into the deep; she had to go right through the midst of these buffeting whirlpools to get to the sea-witch's domain, and here, for a long stretch, there was no other way than across hot bubbling mire which the witch called her turf moss. Right behind lay her house in the midst of a strange wood. All the trees and bushes were polypi, half animal, half vegetable, they looked like hundred-headed serpents growing out of the earth; all their branches were long slimy

arms, with fingers like supple snakes, and joint by joint they were twisting and twirling from the roots to the outermost tips of their branches. Everything in the sea which they could catch hold of they wound themselves about and never let go of it

again. The little Princess was quite terrified and remained standing outside there; her heart thumped for fear, she was very near turning back again, but then she thought of the Prince and of the human soul, and her courage came back to her. She bound her long fluttering hair close to her head so that the

polypi might not grip hold of her thereby, then she crossed both hands over her breast, and away she flew through the water as only fishes can fly, right between the hideous polypi which stretched out their long supple arms and fingers after her. She saw that every one of them still had something which it had gripped, hundreds of little fingers held it like iron bands. Men who had perished in the sea and sunk down thither peeped forth from the arms of the polypi in the shape of white skeletons. Ships' rudders and coffers too they held fast; there were also the skeletons of land animals and even a little mermaid whom they had caught and tortured to death, and *that* was to her the most terrible sight of all.

And now she came to a large slimy open space in the wood where big fat water-snakes were wallowing and airing their ugly whity-yellow bellies. In the midst of the empty space a house had been raised from the white bones of shipwrecked men; here sat the sea-witch and let a toad eat out of her mouth just as men let little canary-birds pick sugar. She called the hideous fat water-snakes her chicks and let them roll about over her large spongy bosom.

"I know very well what you want!" said the sea-witch; "you're a fool for your pains! Nevertheless you shall have your own way, for it will get you into trouble, my pretty Princess. You want to get rid of your fish's tail, eh? and have a couple of stumps to walk about on as men have, so that the young Prince may fall in love with you, and you may get him and an immortal soul into the bargain!" And with that, the witch laughed so loudly and hideously that the toad and the snakes fell

down upon the ground and began wallowing there. "You have come at the very nick of time," said the witch; "if you had put it off till to-morrow, at sunrise, I should not have been able to help you for another year. I'll brew you a potion, but you must swim to land, sit down on the shore, and drink it off before sunrise, and then your tail will split and shrivel up into what men call nice legs; but it will hurt, it will be like a sharp sword piercing through you. All who see you will say that you are the loveliest child of man they ever saw. You will keep your lightsome gait, no dancing girl will be able to float along like you; but every stride you take will be to you like treading on some sharp knife till the blood flows. If you like to suffer all this, I'll help you."

"I will," said the little mermaid with a trembling voice; she thought of the Prince and of winning an immortal soul.

"But remember this," said the witch, "when once you have got a human shape you can never become a mermaid again! You can never again descend down through the water to your sisters and to your father's palace, and if you do not win the Prince's love so that, for your sake, he forgets father and mother and cleaves to you with all his soul, and lets the priest lay your hands together and make you man and wife, you will get no immortal soul at all! The very first morning after he has married another your heart will break and you will become foam upon the water!"

"Be it so!" said the little mermaid, but she was as pale as death.

"But you must pay me too," said the witch, "and it will not be a small thing either that I demand. You have the loveliest voice of all things down below here at the bottom of the sea, you

fancy you will enchant him with that, I know; not a bit of it, you must give that voice to me. I mean to have your best possession in return for my precious potion, for have I not to give you of my own blood in it, so that the potion may be as sharp as a two-edged sword?"

"But if you take my voice, what will be left for me?" asked the little mermaid.

"Your lovely shape," said the witch, "your lightsome gait and your speaking eye; you can fool a man's heart with them, I suppose? Well! have you lost heart, eh? Put out your little tongue and I'll cut it off in payment, and you shall have the precious potion!"

"Be it so, then!" said the little mermaid, and the witch put her kettle on to brew the magic potion. "Cleanliness is a good thing," said she, and she scoured out the cauldron with the snakes, which she tied into a knot; then she gashed herself in the breast and let her black blood drip down into the cauldron. The steam that rose from it took the strangest shapes, so that one could not but feel anguish and terror. Every moment the witch put something fresh into the cauldron, and when it was well on the boil it sounded like a crying crocodile. At last the drink was ready, it looked like the clearest water!

"There you are!" said the witch, and cut out the tongue of the little mermaid who was now quite dumb; she could neither sing nor talk.

"If the polypi grip at you when you go back through the wood," said the witch, "just you throw a single drop of this potion upon them, and their arms and fingers will burst into a thousand bits!" But the little mermaid had no need to do this,

the polypi shrank back from her in terror when they saw the shining potion which sparkled in her hand like a dazzling star. So very soon she got through the wood, the morass and the raging whirlpool. She could see her father's palace; the lights in the long dancing-hall had been put out; all within there were doubtless sleeping; but she dared not venture thither to visit them now that she was dumb, and wanted to go away from them for ever. Yet her heart felt as if it must burst asunder for sorrow. She crept down into the garden, plucked a flower from each of her sister's flower-beds, threw a thousand kisses towards the palace, and ascended again through the dark blue sea. The sun had not yet risen when she beheld the Prince's palace, and mounted the splendid marble staircase. The moon was shining bright and beautiful. The little mermaid drank the sharp burning potion, and it was as though a two-edged sword pierced right through her body; she moaned with the agony and lay there as one dead.

When the sun shone over the sea she woke up and felt a sharp pang, but right in front of her stood the handsome young Prince. He fixed his coal-black eyes upon her, so that she cast her own eyes down and saw that her fish tail had gone, and that she had the prettiest little white legs, but she was quite naked, so she wrapped herself in her large long locks. The Prince asked who she was and how she came thither; and she looked at him with her dark blue eyes so mildly, and yet so sadly, for speak she could not. Then he took her by the hand and led her into his palace. Every step she took was, as the witch said it would be beforehand, as if she were treading on pointed awls or sharp knives, but she willingly bore it; holding the Prince's hand, she mounted the staircase as

light as a bubble, and he and every one else were amazed at her graceful, lightsome gait. She was arrayed in the most costly garments, all silk and muslin, none in the whole palace was so lovely as she; but she was dumb, she could neither sing nor speak. Lovely slave-girls, clad in silk and gold, came forth and sang to the Prince and his royal parents; one of them sang more sweetly than all the rest, and the Prince clapped his hands and smiled at her. Then the little mermaid was troubled, she knew that she herself had sung far more sweetly, and she thought: "Oh, would that he might know that for the sake of being near him, I have given away my voice for ever and ever!"

And now the slave-girls danced the graceful, lightsome dance to the loveliest music, and then the little mermaid raised on high her lovely white arms, raised herself on the tips of her toes, and danced and swept across the floor as none ever danced before; at every movement her loveliness became more and more visible and her eyes spoke more deeply to the heart than ever the songs of the slave-girl. They were all enchanted with her, especially the Prince, who called her his little foundling, and she danced more and more, though every time her feet touched the ground it was as if she trod upon a sharp knife. The Prince said she should always be with him, and she got leave to sit outside his door on a velvet cushion.

He had a male costume made for her that she might ride out with him. They rode through the fragrant woods where the green branches smote her on the shoulders and the little birds sang behind the fresh leaves. She clambered with the Prince right up the high mountains, and although her tender feet bled, so that the

others could see it, she only laughed at it and followed him till they saw the clouds sailing below them like flocks of birds departing to a foreign land.

At night, in the Prince's palace, while others slept, she went out upon the broad marble staircase, and it cooled her burning feet to stand in the cold sea-water, and then she thought of them in the depths below.

One night her sisters came up arm in arm, they sang so sorrowfully as they swam in the water, and she nodded to them, and they recognised her, and told her how miserable she had made them all. After that, they visited her every night, and one night she saw, a long way out, her old grandmother who had not been above the sea for many years, and the Sea-King with his crown upon his head; they stretched out their hands towards her, but dared not come so close to land as her sisters.

She became dearer to the Prince every day. He loved her as one might love a dear, good child; but to make her his queen never entered his mind, and his wife she must be, or she would never have an immortal soul, but would become foam upon the sea upon his bridal morn.

"Do you love me most of all?" the eyes of the little mermaid seemed to say when he took her in his arms and kissed her fair brow.

"Yes, you are dearest of all to me," said the Prince, "for you have the best heart of them all, you are most devoted to me, and you are just like a young girl I once saw but certainly shall never see again. I was on a ship which was wrecked, the billows drifted me ashore near a holy temple, where many young girls were the ministrants. The youngest, who found me on the sea-shore and saved

my life, I only saw twice; she is the only girl I can love in this world, but you are like her, you almost expel her image from my soul; she belongs to that holy temple, and therefore my good fortune has sent me you instead, we will never part!"

"Alas! he knows not that 'twas I who saved his life!" thought the little mermaid. "I bore him right over the sea to the wood where the temple stands, I sat behind the foam and looked to see if any one would come; I saw the pretty girl whom he loves better than me!" And the mermaid drew a deep sigh, weep she could not. "He says the girl belongs to that holy temple, she will never come forth into the world, they will never meet again. I am with him, I see him every day, I will cherish him, love him, sacrifice my life for him!"

But now the Prince was to be married and take the lovely daughter of the neighbouring king to wife, and that was why he now set about equipping a splendid ship. The Prince is travelling to see the land of the neighbouring king, that is what they said; but it was to see the neighbouring king's daughter that he went forth with such a grand retinue. But the little mermaid shook her head and laughed; she knew the Prince's thoughts much better than all the others. "I must travel," he had said to her, "I must see the fair Princess, my parents require it of me; but they shall not compel me to bring her home as my bride. I cannot love her, she is not like the lovely girl in the temple whom you are like. Should I ever choose me a bride, it would rather be you, my dumb foundling with the speaking eyes!" And he kissed her red mouth, played with her long hair, and laid his head close to her heart till her heart dreamt of human bliss and an immortal soul.

"Surely you are not frightened at the sea, my dumb child!" said he, as they stood on the gorgeous ship which was to carry him to the land of the neighbouring king; and he told her about storm and calm, about the strange fishes of the deep, and what the divers had seen down there, and she smiled at his telling, for she knew better than any one else all about the bottom of the sea.

In the moonlight nights when all were asleep save the man at the helm, she sat at the side of the ship and looked down through the clear water and seemed to see her father's palace, and at the very top of it stood the old grandmother with the silver crown upon her head, and stared up at the ship's keel through the contrary currents. Then her sisters came up to the surface of the water, they gazed sadly at her and wrung their white hands. She beckoned to them, smiled, and would have told them that everything was going on well and happily, but the cabin-boy drew near at that moment and her sisters ducked down again, so that she half fancied that the white things she had seen were the foam upon the sea.

The next morning the ship sailed into the haven of the neighbouring king's splendid capital. All the church bells were ringing, they blew blasts with the bassoons from the tops of the high towers, while the soldiers stood drawn up with waving banners and flashing bayonets. Every day had its own special feast. Balls and assemblies followed each other in rapid succession, but the Princess was not yet there, she had been brought up in a holy temple far away, they said, where she had learnt all royal virtues. At last she arrived.

Full of eagerness, the little mermaid stood there to see her

loveliness ; and recognise it she must, a more beauteous shape she had never seen. Her skin was so transparently fine, and from behind the long dark eyelashes smiled a pair of dark blue, faithful eyes.

"'Tis thou!" said the Prince, "thou who hast saved me when I lay like a corpse on the sea-shore!" and he embraced his blushing bride. "Oh! I am so happy, I don't know what to do!" said he to the little mermaid. "The very best I dared to hope has come to pass. You too will rejoice at my good fortune, for you love me more than them all!" And the little mermaid kissed his hand, and she felt that her heart was like to break. Yes, his bridal-morn would be the death of her, and change her into sea-foam.

All the bells were ringing, and the heralds rode about the streets to proclaim the espousals.

Fragrant oil in precious silver lamps burned upon every altar. The priests swung their censers, and the bride and bridegroom gave each other their hands and received the bishop's benediction. The little mermaid stood there in cloth of gold and held the bride's train, but her ears did not hear the festal music, her eyes did not see the sacred ceremony, she thought of her night of death, she thought of all she had lost in this world.

The same evening the bride and bridegroom went on board the ship, the cannons were fired, all the flags waved, and in the midst of the ship a royal tent was raised of cloth of gold and purple and precious furs; there the bridal pair were to sleep in the still, cool night.

The sails swelled out in the breeze, and the ship glided, lightly rocking, away over the bright ocean. When it grew dark, coloured

lamps were lit, and the mariners danced merry dances on the deck. The little mermaid could not help thinking of the first time she had ducked up above the sea, and seen the self-same gaiety and splendour, and she whirled round and round in the dance, skimming along as the swallow skims when it is pursued, and they all applauded her enthusiastically, never before had she danced so splendidly. There was a piercing as of sharp knives in her feet, but she felt it not; the anguish of her heart was far more piercing. She knew it was the last evening she was to see *him* for whom she had forsaken house and home, surrendered her lovely voice, and suffered endless tortures day by day, without his having any idea of it all. It was the last night she was to breathe the same air as he, and look upon the deep sea and the star-lit sky; an eternal night without a thought, without a dream, awaited her who had no soul and could not win one. And all was joy and jollity on board the ship till long past midnight, and she laughed and danced with the thought of death in her heart. The Prince kissed his lovely bride, and she toyed with his black hair, and arm in arm they went to rest in the gorgeous tent.

It grew dark and still on board; only the steersman was there, standing at the helm. The little mermaid laid her white arms on the railing and looked towards the east for the rosy dawn, the first sunbeam, she knew it well, must kill her. Then she saw her sisters rise up from the sea, they were as pale as she was; their long fair hair fluttered no longer in the breeze, it was all cut off.

"We have given it to the witch that she might bring help so that you may not die to-night! She has given us a knife, here it is, look how sharp it is! Before the sun rises you must thrust it into

the Prince's heart, and then, when his warm blood sprinkles your feet, they will grow together into a fish's tail, and you will become a mermaid again, and may sink down through the water to us, and live out your three hundred years before you become dead, salt sea-foam. But hasten! Either you or he must die before sun-rise. Our old grandmother has sorrowed so that her hair has fallen off, just as ours has fallen off beneath the witch's shears. Kill the Prince and come back to us! Hasten! Don't you see the red strip in the sky yonder? A few minutes more and the sun will rise and you must die." And they heaved a wondrously deep sigh and sank beneath the billows.

The little mermaid drew aside the purple curtains from the tent door, and she saw the beauteous bride sleeping with her head on the Prince's breast, and she bent down, kissed him on his fair brow, looked at the sky where the red dawn shone brighter and brighter, looked at the sharp knife, and again fixed her eyes on the Prince, who, in his dreams, named his wife by her name, she alone was in his thoughts. And the knife quivered in the mermaid's hand—but then she cast it out far into the billows, they shone red where it fell, it looked as if drops of blood were there bubbling up out of the water. Once again she looked with half-breaking eyes at the Prince, plunged from the ship into the sea, and felt her whole body dissolving into foam.

And now the sun rose out of the sea, his rays fell with so gentle a warmth upon the death-cold sea foam, and the little mermaid did not feel death; she saw the bright sun, and right above her hundreds of beauteous, transparent shapes were hovering. Through them she could see the white sails of the ship and the red clouds of

the sky, their voice was all melody, but so ethereal that no human ear could hear it, just as no human eye could see them; they had no wings, but their very lightness wafted them up and down in the air. The little mermaid saw that she had a body like them, it rose higher and higher out of the foam. "To whom have I come?" said she, and her voice sounded like the voices of the other beings, so ethereal that no earthly music can render it.

"To the daughters of the air," answered the others; "the mermaid has no immortal soul and can never have one unless she wins a man's love, her eternal existence depends upon a Power beyond her. The daughters of the air, likewise, have no immortal soul, but they can make themselves one by good deeds. We fly to the hot countries, where the sultry, pestilential air slays the children of men; there we waft coolness. We spread the fragrance of flowers through the air and send refreshment and healing. When for three hundred years we have striven to do all the good we can, we get an immortal soul and have a share in the eternal destinies of mankind. Thou, poor little mermaid, thou also hast striven after good with thy whole heart; like us, thou hast suffered and endured, and raised thyself into the sphere of the spirits of the air; now, therefore, thou canst also win for thyself an immortal soul after three hundred years of good deeds."

And the little mermaid raised her bright arms towards God's sun, and for the first time she felt tears in her eyes. There was life and bustle on board the ship again, she saw the Prince with his fair bride looking for her, and they gazed sadly down upon the bubbling foam, as if they knew she had plunged into the billows. Invisible as she was, she kissed the bride's brow, smiled upon the

Prince, and ascended with the other children of the air up to the rosy red clouds which were sailing along in the sky. "For three hundred years we shall float and float till we float right into God's kingdom."

"Yea, and we may also get there still sooner," whispered one of them. "Invisibly we sweep into the houses of men, where there are children, and every day we find there a good child who gladdens his parents' hearts, and deserves their love, God shortens our time of trial. The child does not know when we fly through the room, but when we can smile with joy over it, a whole year is taken from off the three hundred; but whenever we see a bad, naughty child, we must, perforce, weep tears of sorrow, and every tear adds a day to our time of trial!"

THE TINDERBOX.

A SOLDIER came marching along the highway: Left, right! left, right! He had his knapsack on his back and a sword by his side, for he had been to the wars and was now coming home. Then he met an old witch on the highway; she was so ugly, her underlip hung right down upon her breast.

"Good evening, soldier," said she; "what a nice sword you've got, and a big knapsack, too; you are something like a soldier! You shall have as much money as you know what to do with."

"Thanks to you, old witch!" said the soldier.

"Do you see that large tree?" said the witch, and she pointed to a tree which stood close beside them. "It is quite hollow inside. You must creep up to the top of it, and then you'll see a hole through which you can let yourself glide, and so you'll come deep down into the tree. I will fasten a cord round your body so that I may hoist you up again when you call to me."

"And what am I to do right down in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"Fetch money!" said the witch. "I must tell you that when

you get to the very bottom of the tree you will see a large passage; it is quite light, for hundreds and hundreds of lamps are burning there. Presently you'll come to three doors, you can open them all, for the keys are in them. When you go into the first chamber, you will see in the middle of the floor a large chest, on the top of which sits a dog; he has eyes as large as teacups, but you must not mind about that. I will give you my blue-striped apron, that you may spread it out on the floor; then march briskly up to the dog, seize him, place him on my apron, open the chest and take as many pieces of money as you like. They are of copper, the whole lot of them; but if you would rather have silver, you must go into the next chamber; there sits a dog who has eyes as large as mill-wheels, but you must not mind about that, only put him on my apron and help yourself to the money. If, however, you would prefer gold, you can have that also—yes, as much of it as you can carry, if only you go into the third chamber. But the dog that sits on the money-chest there has two eyes, each one of which is as big as "The Round Tower."[1] That is something like a dog, I can tell you! But just you put him on my apron and he won't hurt you a bit, and then you can take out of the chest as much gold as you like."

"It doesn't sound so bad," said the soldier. "But what am I to give you then, eh, old witch?—for you mean to have something out of me for it, I know."

"No," said the witch, "I won't have a single farthing. You

[1] Not "Round Towers," as sometimes translated. The famous "Round Tower" at Copenhagen, built by Tycho Brahe's pupil, Kristen Langberg, is meant, and would occur at once to every Danish child.

must only bring me an old tinderbox which my grandmother forgot when she was last down there."

"All right! Let me fasten the cord round my body," said the soldier.

"Here it is," said the witch, "and here is my blue-striped apron."

So the soldier crept up the tree, let himself plump down into the hole, and now stood, as the witch had said, in the large passage where hundreds and hundreds of lamps were burning.

And now he unlocked the first door. Ugh! there sat the dog with the eyes as large as teacups, and glared at him.

"You're a pretty chap!" said the soldier, putting him on the witch's apron, and taking as many copper coins as he could cram into his pockets. Then he locked the chest, put the dog on the top of it again, and went into the second chamber. Ugh! there sat the dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels.

"You shouldn't stare at me so much," said the soldier, "you might injure your eyesight!" And with that he placed the dog on the witch's apron, but when he saw the heaps of silver money in the chest he pitched away all the copper money he had and filled his pockets and his knapsack with nothing but silver. Then he went into the third chamber. Nay! it was truly hideous. The dog in that room really had two eyes, each one of which was as large as "The Round Tower," and they ran round in his head just like clock-work.

"Good evening!" said the soldier, and touched his cap, for a dog like that he had never seen before; but after looking at him a bit longer, "Come, come," thought he, "I've stared enough now,

surely!" and lifting him down on to the floor he unlocked the chest.—Gracious me! what a lot of gold was there! Why, with all that money he might have bought the whole of Copenhagen, and all the sugar pigs of all the cake-women there, together with all the tin soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the whole world! Yes, there was money there, and no mistake! Then the soldier threw away all the silver pieces he had filled his pockets and his knapsack with, and took gold instead—yes, he filled his pockets, his knapsack, his cap, and his shoes so that he could hardly walk. Now he really had money! Then he lifted the dog on to the chest again, banged to the door, and bawled up the tree, "Hoist me up now, you old witch!"

"Have you got the tinderbox with you?" asked the witch.

"Right you are!" said the soldier. "I had clean forgotten it," and he went back and fetched it. The witch hoisted him up, and so he stood again upon the highway, with his pockets, boots, knapsack, and cap crammed full of money.

"What do you want with this tinderbox?" asked the soldier.

"That doesn't concern you," said the witch. "You've got your money, haven't you? Give me the tinderbox, that's all I want."

"Rubbish!" said the soldier. "Will you tell me this instant what you want with it? If not, I'll draw my sword and cut your head off!"

"No," said the witch, "I won't!"

So the soldier chopped off her head. There she lay, but he tied up all his money in her apron, slung it over his shoulder, put the tinderbox in his pocket, and went straight to town.

It was a pretty town, and he put up at the prettiest inn there, demanded the very best rooms they had and the food he was fondest of, for now he was rich—he had lots of money.

To the servant who cleaned his boots it seemed absurd that so rich a gentleman should have such ridiculous old boots, but he

had not yet had time to buy himself new ones. Next day he got proper walking boots and really beautiful clothes. So the soldier now became a fine gentleman, and they told him all about their town and its riches and splendour, and about their King, and what a charming daughter he had.

"Where can one get a peep at her?" asked the soldier.

"You can't see her at all," they all said; "she dwells in a large copper castle with walls and no end of towers all around it. None but the King may go in and out of it to see her, for it has been foretold that she will become the wife of a mere common soldier, and the King cannot endure the thought of that."

"Would that I might but see her!" thought the soldier; but of course it was quite out of the question.

And now he lived right merrily, went to the theatre, drove in the King's park, and gave lots of money to the poor, which was very handsome of him. He knew indeed, of old, how bad it was to be without a farthing. But now he was rich and had fine clothes, and a lot of friends who all said what a fine fellow, what a perfect gentleman he was, and the soldier rather liked it than otherwise. But as he was paying money away every day, and none was coming in, he at last found that he had only two farthings left, and was obliged to quit the handsome apartments where he had been living, and make the best of a little bit of a room right under the roof, where he had to clean his own boots, and mend them with a darning needle, and not one of his friends came to see him—they did not like going up so many stairs.

It was a very dark evening, and he had not enough to even buy himself a candle, when it occurred to him that there might be the fag end of one in the tinderbox he had picked up in the hollow tree where the witch had helped him down. So he took out the tinderbox and the candle stump, but while he was striking

a light and the sparks were flying from the flintstone, the door flew open and the dog with eyes as big as tea-cups, whom he had seen down in the tree, stood before him and said, "What does my lord command?"

"Well, I never!" said the soldier. "It would be a funny sort of tinderbox if I can get whatever I want! Fetch me some money," said he to the dog, and whisk! it was gone—whisk! and it was back again, and held in its mouth a large bag full of copper coins.

And now the soldier understood what a very nice sort of tinderbox it really was. If he struck it once, the dog came who sat upon the chest full of copper coins; if he struck it twice, the dog came who had the silver money; and if he struck it thrice, the dog came who had the gold. So the soldier flitted down stairs again to his handsome apartments, got more good clothes, and all his old friends immediately recognised and made much of him.

One day he fell a-thinking: "How very ridiculous it is that one cannot get a peep at the Princess! Every one says how lovely she is, but what's the good of that if she is to mope away all her days in the big copper castle with the many towers? Can't I get to see her somehow? Where's my tinderbox?" And so he struck a light, and whisk! there stood the dog with the eyes as big as tea-cups.

"I know very well that it is midnight," said the soldier, "but I should so very much like to see the Princess, if it were only for a tiny moment!"

The dog was immediately out of the house, and before the soldier had time to think about it, he saw him reappear with the

Princess—she lay asleep on the dog's back, and was so lovely that any one could see at once she was a real Princess. The soldier could not let well alone. Kiss her he must, for he was a true soldier.

The dog ran back again with the Princess, but when it was morning, and the King and Queen were having breakfast, the Princess said that she had dreamed such a strange dream in the night about a dog and a soldier. She had ridden on the dog, and the soldier had kissed her.

"A very pretty story truly!" said the Queen.

And now one of the old ladies-in-waiting was told off to watch by the Princess's bed next night to see if it were really a dream or what else it could be.

The soldier longed so frightfully for another glimpse of the Princess, and so the dog came again at night, took her, and ran away with all its might; but the old lady-in-waiting put on waterproof boots and ran just as quickly behind them. When she saw them disappear into a large house, she thought, "Now I know where it is," and marked a great cross on the door with a piece of chalk. Then she went home and lay down, and the dog also came along that way again with the Princess; but when he saw that a cross had been marked on the door where the soldier dwelt, he also took a piece of chalk and marked crosses on all the doors in the town, and very clever it was of him, for now indeed the Court dame could not possibly find the right door among so many.

Very early in the morning the King and the Queen, the old Court dame and all the Court officials, came to see where it was the Princess had been.

"It is there!" said the King, when he saw the first door with a cross upon it.

"No, it is there, my darling husband!" said the Queen, who saw the second door with the cross upon it.

"But there is one here, and there is one there!" cried all the courtiers. Wherever they looked there were crosses on the doors. So they soon saw that it was no good searching any farther.

But the Queen was a very wise woman, who could do much more than merely ride about in a coach. She took her large gold scissors, snipped a large piece of silk-stuff into small bits and sewed them into a pretty little bag; this she filled with small fine grains of buckwheat, fastened it to the Princess's back, and when this was done, she cut a little hole in the bag so that the grains might dribble through along the whole way the Princess went.

At night the dog came again, took the Princess on his back, and ran away with her to the soldier, who was so fond of her and longed so much to be a Prince that he might have her to wife.

The dog did not observe at all how the grains were dribbling all the way from the Palace to the soldier's dwelling, where it ran right up the wall with the Princess; so in the morning the King and Queen saw at once where their daughter had been, wherefore they seized the soldier and threw him into jail.

There he sat. Ugh! how dark and horrid it was, and they said to him, "To-morrow you shall be hanged!" It was not a pleasant thing to hear, and he had forgotten his tinderbox at the inn. In the morning he could see through the iron bars of the little window all the people hastening out of the town to see him hanged. He heard the drums and saw the soldiers marching. Every one was

running that way as fast as they could. Among them was a cobbler's lad with a leather apron and slippers on; he was galloping along at such a rate that one of his slippers flew off right against the wall where the soldier was peeping out between the iron bars.

"Hi! you cobbler-lad, don't be in such a hurry!" said the soldier to him. "Nothing will take place till I arrive, but if you will just skip over to where I have been living and fetch me my tinderbox, you shall have five copper pieces, but you must stir your stumps a bit!" The cobbler's lad wanted the five copper pieces very much, so off he set for the tinderbox, gave it to the soldier, and—yes, now you *shall* hear something!

Outside the town a large gallows had been erected, round about it stood the soldiers and many hundreds of thousands of people. The King and Queen sat upon a beautiful throne right opposite the Judge and the whole Council.

The soldier already stood upon the ladder, but just as they were about to throw the cord round his neck, he said that it had always been the custom for a criminal before undergoing his sentence to have one innocent wish gratified. He would so much like, he said, to smoke a pipe of tobacco—it was, after all, the last pipe he would ever smoke in this world! The King did not like to say no to that, and so the soldier took out his tinderbox and struck a light—one, two, three! and there stood all the dogs, the one with eyes as big as tea-cups, the one with eyes as big as mill-wheels, and the one with eyes as big as "The Round Tower."

"Save me now from being hanged!" said the soldier, and with that the dogs rushed upon the Judges and the whole

Council, took one by the legs and another by the nose and pitched them up fathoms high into the air so that they fell down and were dashed to pieces.

"I won't have it!" said the King; but the biggest dog took both him and the Queen and hurled them ever so much farther than all the others; then the soldiers grew frightened and all the people cried, "Little soldier, you shall be our King and have the pretty Princess!"

So the soldier sat in the King's carriage, and all three dogs danced in front and cried, "Hurrah!" and the boys whistled through their fingers, and the soldiers presented arms, and the Princess came out of the copper castle and became Queen, and rather liked it than otherwise. The wedding lasted eight days, and the dogs sat at the table and made big eyes.

LITTLE CLAUS AND BIG CLAUS.

THERE were two men in one city who both had the self-same name—both of them were called Claus; but one owned four horses and the other only one horse, so to distinguish them from one another they called him with the four horses Big Claus, and him with only one horse Little Claus. We shall now hear how it fared with these two men, for this is a true story.

The whole week through Little Claus had to plough for Big Claus and lend him his one horse, and Big Claus helped him again with all his four horses, but only once a week, and that was on Sunday. Huzzah! how Little Claus cracked his whip over all four horses—they were as good as his own that one day. The sun shone so charmingly, and all the bells in the church tower were ringing for church; the people were all so smartly dressed and walked along with their hymn-books under the arms to hear their parson preach, and they looked at Little Claus who was ploughing with his five horses, and he was so delighted that he cracked his whip again and cried, "Gee up, my five horses!"

"You must not say that," said Big Claus; "it is only *one* horse, you know, which is yours."

Soon afterwards some one else passed by to church, and little Claus forgot that he was not to say it, and cried again, "Gee up, all my five horses!"

"Let us have no more of this, d'ye hear?" said Big Claus; "for if you say it once more, I'll give your horse a blow on the forehead that will make him drop down dead on the spot, and then we'll have done with him!"

"I really will not say it again," said little Claus; but when more people passed by that way, and nodded and said good-day, he was so delighted, and it seemed to him such a fine thing to have five horses to plough his land with, that he cracked his whip again and cried, "Gee up, all my five horses!"

"I'll gee up your horse for you!" said Big Claus, and he took up the tetherpin and struck little Claus's one horse on the forehead so that it fell down dead on the spot.

"Alas! now I have no horse at all!" said little Claus, so he fell a-weeping. But after a while he flayed the horse, took away the hide, and, after letting it dry well in the wind, put it in a bag, which he threw over his shoulders, and went to town to sell his horse-hide.

He had such a long way to go. He had to go right through a large wood, and it had become terribly bad weather. He quite lost his way, and before he found it again it was evening, and too far to get to town or home again before nightfall.

Close by the wayside lay a large farm; the shutters had been put up in front of the windows outside, but the light shone out above them.

"I should think I could get leave to stay the night there," thought Little Claus, so he went up and knocked.

The farmer's wife opened the door, but when she heard what he wanted, she told him to be off; her husband was not at home, she said, and she did not receive strangers.

"Well, I suppose I must lie outside," said Little Claus, and the farmer's wife shut the door in his face.

Close by stood a large haystack, and between it and the house a little shed with a flat straw roof had been built.

"I can lie up there," said Little Claus, when he saw the roof; "a splendid bed it will be, and I don't think the stork will fly down and nibble my legs." For there on the top of the roof stood a live stork, which had built its nest there.

So Little Claus crept up on to the shed, and there he lay down and turned about to make himself quite comfortable. The wooden shutters before the farm-windows did not fit close atop, and so he could see right into the room.

A large table was spread with wine and roast meat and such a nice fish, and the farmer's wife and the clerk sat at table, and none besides; and she was filling his glass for him, and he was well to work with the fish, for it was a dish that he loved.

"If only I could have a finger in that pie!" said Little Claus, and he stretched his head out towards the window. Heavens! what lovely cakes he could see standing inside there. Why, it was a regular feast!

And now he heard some one riding along the highway towards the house: it was the husband coming home. He was such a good man, but he had a strange failing: he could not endure the

sight of a clerk! If a clerk caught his eye, he became downright frantic. That was why the clerk had looked in to say good-day to the wife when he knew that the husband was not at home, and the good wife had set before him all her best dishes. Now, when they heard the husband coming, they were so scared that the wife begged the clerk to creep into a large empty chest which stood on one side in a corner. He did so, for he knew very well that the wretched husband could not endure the sight of a clerk. The wife hastily concealed all the dainty meats and wine inside her baking oven, for had her husband caught sight of them, he might have asked what was the meaning of it all.

"Ah me!" sighed Little Claus on the top of the shed, when he saw all the meat smuggled away.

"Is there any one up there?" asked the farmer, and peered up at Little Claus. "Why do you lie there? Hadn't you better come into the room along with me?"

So Little Claus told how he had lost his way, and begged that he might stay the night there.

"Yes, certainly!" said the farmer; "but first let us have a little bit of something to eat."

The wife welcomed the pair of them most kindly, spread a long table, and gave them a large dish of greens. The farmer was hungry and ate with a rare good appetite, but Little Claus could not help thinking of the dainty meat, fish, and cakes which he knew to be inside the oven.

Under the table at his feet he had laid his sack with the horse-hide inside it, for we know that he had left home in order to sell it

in the town. The greens he could not stomach at all, and so he trod upon his bag, and the dry hide in the sack crackled quite loudly.

"Hush!" said Little Claus to his sack, but at the same time he trod upon it again, and again it crackled much more loudly than before.

"Why, what have you got in that sack?" asked the farmer.

"Oh, it is a wizard!" said Little Claus; "he says that we ought not to eat greens, he has charmed the whole oven full of roast meat and fish and cakes."

"What an idea!" said the farmer, and in a trice he had opened the oven, where he saw all the savoury meat his wife had concealed, but which he thought had been spirited there for them by the wizard in the bag. The wife dared not say anything, but immediately placed the food on the table, so they both of them feasted upon the fish and the roast and the cakes. Shortly afterwards Little Claus again trod upon his bag so that the hide crackled.

"What does he say now?" asked the farmer.

"He says," said Little Claus, "that he has also conjured up for us three flasks of wine; they also stand in the oven." And now the woman was obliged to bring forth the wine that she had hidden, and the farmer drank and grew merry. Such a wizard as Little Claus had in his bag he would have been right glad to call his own.

"Can he call up the devil also?" asked the farmer. "I should like to see him now anyway, I feel so jolly."

"Yes," said Little Claus, "my wizard can do everything that I

desire. Eh, can't you?" he asked, and trod upon the bag till it crackled again. "Don't you hear?—he says yes! But the devil is really so ugly that he is not worth looking at."

"Oh, I am not a bit afraid, whatever he looks like!"

"Very well, he will show himself in the shape of a clerk as large as life."

"Ugh!" said the farmer, "that's ugly certainly! You must know that I cannot bear the sight of a clerk. But 'tis all one. I know very well that it is only the devil, so I'll put up with it for once. I've lots of pluck you know, but pray don't let him come too near."

"Now I will ask my wizard," said Little Claus, and he trod upon the bag and put his ear to it.

"What does he say?"

"He says that if you go yonder and open the chest which stands in the corner, you will see the devil lurking there, but you must hold fast the lid in case he slips out."

"Won't you help me to hold it?" said the farmer, and he went towards the chest where his wife had hidden the real clerk, who sat there trembling in every limb.

The farmer lifted the lid a little and peeped under it. "Ugh!" he shrieked, and sprang back. "Yes, yes! I saw him—he looks just like our clerk! It was truly horrible!"

They were bound to take a glass or two on the strength of it, and so they drank and drank till far into the night.

"You must sell me that wizard," said the farmer; "ask whatever you like for him. Yes, I say, I'll give you half a bushel of money on the spot."

"No, I can't do it!" said Little Claus; "just think what a lot I make out of this wizard."

"Ah! I should like to have it above all things," said the farmer, and never ceased begging and praying for it.

"Well," said Little Claus at last, "as you have been so kind and given me a night's lodging, be it so, I don't much care. You shall have the wizard for half a bushel of money, but I must have the half-bushel brimful."

"That indeed you shall," said the farmer; "but you must take that chest along with you, I won't have it in my house an hour longer, there's no knowing whether he may not be sitting there still."

Little Claus gave the farmer his sack with the dry hide in it, and got in exchange for it a whole half-bushel of money, and brimful too. The farmer gave him besides a large wheelbarrow to carry the chest away.

"Farewell!" said Little Claus, and off he bowled with his money and the large chest in which the clerk was still sitting.

On the other side of the wood was a large deep river; the current ran so swiftly that one could scarcely swim against it. A large new bridge had been built over it; in the middle of this bridge Little Claus stopped short, and said quite loudly, so that the clerk in the chest might hear it, "Now, what shall I do with this stupid chest? It is as heavy as if it were full of stones. I am quite tired of bowling it along, so I'll pitch it into the river; if it sails home to me, well and good; and if it doesn't, it is all one to me." Then he took the chest with one hand and tilted it up a little as if he were about to pitch it into the water.

"No, stop!" cried the clerk in the chest. "Let me come out, do! Let me come out!"

"Ugh!" said Little Claus, and pretended to be frightened. "He is still sitting inside, then. Into the river he goes this very instant, and there let him drown!"

"Don't, don't!" cried the clerk; "I'll give you a whole half-bushel of money if you will let me out!"

"Ah, that now is quite another thing!" said Little Claus, and he opened the chest. The clerk immediately crept out, and, after pushing the empty chest into the water, went to his home, where Little Claus got another half-bushel of money. One half-bushel he had already got from the farmer, so now he had his wheelbarrow quite full of money.

"Look now, I made a good bargain out of that horse, said he to himself, when he found himself at home in his own room and pitched all the money in a large heap in the middle of the floor. "It will vex Big Claus when he gets to know how rich I have become with my one horse; but I don't mean to tell him all about it straight off." So he sent a boy to Big Claus to borrow a corn-measure.

"What does he want that for, I should like to know?" thought Big Claus, and he smeared the bottom of it with tar so that a little of what was going to be measured might stick to it; and that was just what did happen, for when he got the measure back again, three new silver penny pieces were sticking to it.

"Well I never!" said Big Claus, and with that he ran straight off to Little Claus. "Where have you got all that money from?" asked he.

"Oh! that is for my horse-hide. I sold it yesterday."

"It was a good bargain!" said Big Claus; then he ran home, took an axe, poleaxed all his four horses, flayed them, and set off townwards with the hides.

"Hides, hides! Who will buy hides?" cried he, through the streets.

All the shoemakers and tanners came running up, and asked him what he wanted for them.

"Half a bushel of money for each one!" said Big Claus.

"Are you crazy?" they all cried; "do you suppose we have bushels of money?"

"Hides, hides! Who will buy hides?" he cried again, but to all who asked the price of the hides he answered, "Half a bushel of money." "He wants to make a fool of us," they said, so the shoemakers took their straps and the tanners their leather aprons and began to beat Big Claus. "Hides, hides!" they cried derisively, "yes, we'll give you a hide that shall sweat pigslard! Out of the town with him!" they cried, and Big Claus had to stir his stumps, for never in all his life had he been so cudgelled.

"Never mind," said he, when he got home, "Little Claus shall pay for this. I'll kill him for it!"

Now, Little Claus's old grandmother had just died in his house. She had always been a crosspatch, and behaved downright badly to him, but yet he was quite distressed about it, and took the dead woman and laid her in his own warm bed. Even if she could not come to life again, she should lie there all night. He himself meant to sit in the corner and sleep on a chair, as he had often done before. Now, when night came, and he was sitting there, the door opened,

and Big Claus came in with his axe. He knew very well where Little Claus's bed was, went straight up to it, and struck the dead grandmother on the forehead, for he fancied it was Little Claus. "There," said he, "you won't make a fool of me any more!" and so he went home again. "That is a bad wicked man if you like!" said Little Claus; "why, he wanted to kill me! It was a good thing

for the old grandmother that she was dead already, or he would certainly have killed her." Then he dressed the old grandmother in her Sunday clothes, borrowed a horse from his neighbour, harnessed it to his cart, and put the old grandmother up behind so that she could not fall out when he drove, and so he rattled away through the wood. By sunrise they had got to a large tavern.

There Little Claus stopped, and went in to get something to eat. The inn-keeper had lots and lots of money, he was also a very good man, but hasty, just as if he were full of snuff and pepper. "Good morning," said he to Little Claus; "you have jumped into your best clothes early this morning."

"Yes," said Little Claus, "I have to go to town with my old grandmother; she is sitting outside in the waggon, I cannot get her to come in. Won't you take her a glass of mead? But don't forget to speak up, she's rather hard of hearing." "All right, I'll take care of that!" said the innkeeper, and he poured out a large glass of mead, and went out with it to the dead grandmother who was perched up in the waggon. "Here is a glass of mead from your grandson," said the landlord; but the dead woman said not a word, and sat quite still. "Don't you hear?" bawled the innkeeper as loudly as he could; "here is a glass of mead from your grandson!" Once more he bawled the same thing at her, and once again, but as she absolutely did not stir from the spot, he grew angry and threw the glass right into her face so that the mead ran down over her nose, and she fell backwards into the waggon, for she was only perched up there and not tied up. "What's all this?" cried Little Claus, and he sprang out of the door and seized hold of the landlord. "Why, look there! If you haven't killed my grandmother! Just look, there is a great hole in her forehead!" "Oh, luckless wretch that I am!" cried the innkeeper, "that all comes from my hastiness! Dear Little Claus, I will give you a whole half-bushel of money, and bury your grandmother into the bargain as if she were my own, only do but hold your tongue about it else they will cut off my head, and that is so nasty!"

So Little Claus got a half-bushel of money, and the landlord buried the dead grandmother as if she had been his own.

Now, when Little Claus got home again with heaps of money, he immediately sent his boy over to Big Claus to beg the loan of his corn-measure. "Why, what's the meaning of this?" said Big Claus; "didn't I strike him dead! I must look to this myself! And so he went over to Little Claus with the measure. "Now, where have you got all that money from?" he asked; and didn't he open his eyes when he saw what a lot there was! "It was my grandmother, and not me whom you killed," said Little Claus, "and I have just sold her for half a bushel of money!"—"That was a good bargain and no mistake!" said Big Claus, and he hastened home, took an axe, and immediately struck his old grandmother dead with it, laid her on the top of a waggon, drove into the town to the apothecary, and asked him whether he wanted to buy a corpse.

"Where is it, and where did you get it from?" asked the apothecary. "It's my grandmother," said Big Claus; "I have killed her in order to get half a bushel of money." "God preserve us!" said the apothecary, "you must be mad! Don't talk like that, for you might lose your head!" And now he showed him plainly what a frightful crime he had committed, and what a bad man he was, and how he ought to be punished. Big Claus grew so frightened that he jumped with one bound out of the apothecary's shop into the cart, whipped up his horses, and drove home; but the apothecary and all the people thought that he was mad, so they let him go his own way.

"I'll pay you off for this!" said Big Claus, when he was

fairly on the high-road. "Yes, Little Claus, won't I make you pay for this!" And as soon as he got home he took the largest sack he could find, went over to Little Claus, and said, "Look now, you have made a fool of me again! First I killed my horses, and then my grandmother. It is all your fault; but you shall never make a fool of me again!" And so he took Little Claus by the waist, put him into the sack, threw him over his shoulder, and bawled to him, "Now, I am going to drown you!"

It was a stiffish walk to the river, and Little Claus was no light weight. The road went hard by the church, the organ was playing, and the people inside were singing so prettily. So Big Claus put down the sack with Little Claus in it close to the church door, and thought that it would be nice to go in and hear a hymn first, before he went any farther. Little Claus could never get out, and all the people were at church, so in he went.

"Alas, alas!" sighed Little Claus, inside the sack. He twisted and he turned, but it was quite impossible, he found, to loosen the strings. At that moment up came an old cattle-drover with chalk-white hair, and a large walking-stick in his hand. He was driving before him a whole herd of cows and bullocks, and they ran right over the sack in which Little Claus was sitting, so that it fell over.

"Alas!" sighed Little Claus, "so young that I am, and yet must go to Heaven already!"

"And I, miserable wretch!" said the cattle-drover, "am so old, and cannot get there yet!"

"Open the sack!" cried Little Claus; "creep into it instead of me, and in that way you'll go straight to Heaven."

"Right gladly will I do so," said the cattle-drover, and he unloosed the sack for Little Claus, who immediately sprang out.

"Will you look after my cattle?" said the old man, and crept into the bag, which Little Claus tied up again, and went his way with all the cows and bullocks.

Shortly afterwards Big Claus came out of church; he shouldered his sack again, and thought, sure enough, that it had grown much lighter, for the old cattle-drover was not half so heavy as Little Claus. "How much lighter he has become! Yes, to be sure! It is because I have been singing hymns!" So on he went to the river, which was broad and deep, threw the sack, with the old cattle-drover inside it, right into mid-stream, and bawled after him—for of course he fancied it was Little Claus—"There now, you won't fool me any more!" Then he went homewards, but when he came to the cross roads, he met Little Claus driving all his cattle before him.

"Why, what's this?" said Big Claus; "haven't I drowned you, then?"

"Well," said Little Claus, "you certainly did throw me into the water a wee half-hour ago."

"But how, then, did you get all those fine cattle?" asked Big Claus.

"They are sea-cattle," said Little Claus. "I will tell you the whole story; and how can I ever thank you for having drowned me! Now that I'm up here on my legs again, I'm pretty rich, I can tell you. I was so frightened as I lay inside the sack, and the wind whistled in my ears when you threw me down from the bridge into the cold water. I sank right down to the very bottom, but I did not hurt myself, for down below there the finest, softest grass grows.

In fact, I fell upon it, and immediately the bag was opened, and the most lovely maiden in chalk-white clothes, and with a green garland round her wet hair, seized my hands and said, 'Is that you, Little Claus? Accept from me first of all some cattle. A mile farther up the road a whole herd of them is browsing, and I give them all to you.' Then I saw that the river was the great highway of these sea-folk. Down at the bottom they walked and drove out of the sea right into the land as far as the river goes. It was so lovely there, what with the flowers and the fresh grasses, and the fishes that swam in the water and whisked about my ears, just as the birds do here in the air. Oh, what nice people were there, and what cattle wandering among the hedges and ditches!"

"But why, then, were you in such a hurry to leave it all and come up to us again?" asked Big Claus. "I would not have done that if it was all so lovely down below."

"Well," said Little Claus, "I fear I *have* been a little sly about it. You heard what I said to you about the sea-maiden telling me that a mile higher up the road (and of course by the road she means the river, for that's the only way she can go) a whole drove of cattle was waiting for me. But I know how the river turns and winds in every direction—it is a terribly round-about way; so, if you can manage it, it is a much shorter cut to come up on the land again and go right across the river again by the bridge, by which means I spared myself half a mile at least, and got all the quicker to my sea-cattle."

"Oh, what a lucky man you are!" said Big Claus. "Do you think that I, too, could get some sea-cattle if I went right down to the bottom of the river?"

"I should think so, indeed," said Little Claus; "but I cannot carry you in the sack all the way to the river, you are much too heavy for me. If you will go there yourself, and then creep into the bag, I will pitch you in with the greatest of pleasure."

"Thank you kindly," said Big Claus; "but if I don't get the sea-cattle when I get down, I'll give you a good drubbing, take my word for it!"

"Oh no, don't be so wicked!"

So they went together to the river. When the cattle, which were thirsty, saw the water, they ran towards it as fast as they could in order to get down to the edge and drink. "Look how they are running," said Little Claus; "they want to get to the bottom again."

"Yes, but you must help me first," said Big Claus, "or else you'll get a thrashing!" and so he crept into the large sack which had been thrown across the back of one of the beasts. "Put a stone in as well, or else I am afraid I sha'n't sink," said Big Claus.

"It will do as it is," said Little Claus, but for all that he put a large stone into the sack, tied the cord fast, and pushed it off. Down it went—plump! There lay Big Claus in the middle of the river and sank at once to the bottom.

"I am afraid he won't find the cattle!" said Little Claus, and so he drove home with what he had.

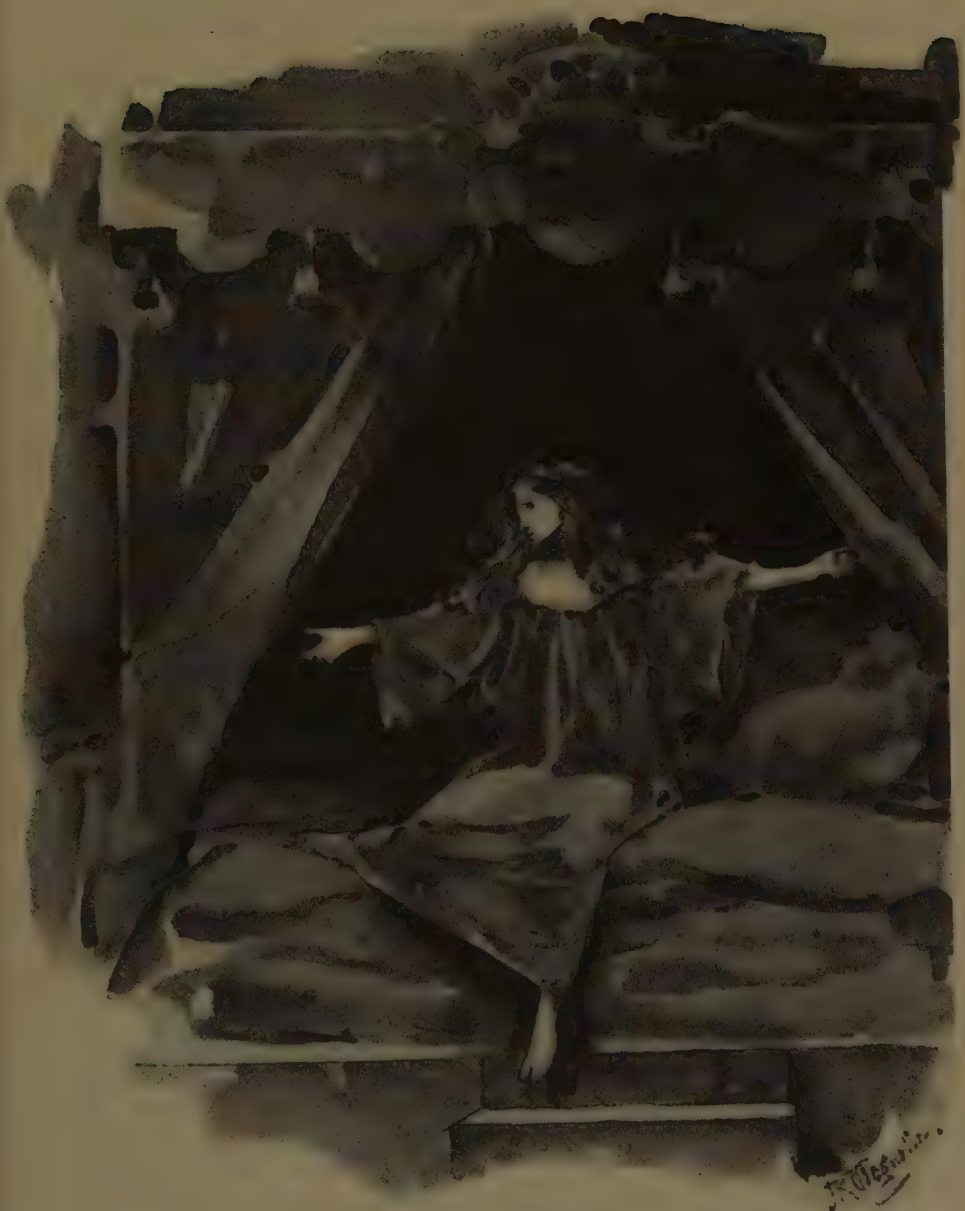
A REAL PRINCESS.

THERE was once upon a time a Prince who was bent upon having a Princess, but it was to be a *real* Princess. So he roamed the whole world over to find such a one, but there was always something the matter. Of Princesses there were enough and to spare, but he could not quite make up his mind as to whether they were *real* Princesses; there was always something that was not quite right. So home he came again, and was much distressed, for he absolutely yearned after a real Princess.

One evening there was a terrible storm, it thundered and lightened, the rain poured in torrents—it was positively frightful! Then there came a knocking at the city gate, and the old King went and opened it.

It was a Princess who stood outside, but oh, what a fright she looked in the rain and wet weather! The water ran all down her hair and clothes, and it ran into the tip of her shoe and out again at the heel, and yet she said she was a real Princess.

"Indeed! We'll see about that presently," thought the old Queen. She said nothing, but she went into her bedroom, took off



all the bed-clothes, and laid a pea at the bottom of the bed; then she took twenty mattresses, laid them on the top of the pea, and finally on the top of the mattresses she put twenty eider-down quilts.

There the Princess was to rest that night.

In the morning the Queen mother asked her how she had slept.

"Oh, horribly!" said the Princess. "I have scarcely had a wink of sleep all night. God knows what there was in my bed! I have been lying on something hard, for my whole body is black and blue! It is perfectly frightful!"

So they could see at once that this was a real Princess, for she had felt the pea through twenty mattresses and twenty-eider down quilts. No one but a real Princess could have had such a sensitive skin as that.

Then the Prince took her to wife, for now he knew that she was a real Princess; and the pea was preserved in the Art Museum, where it may still be seen if no one has taken it away.

There now, that was something like a story!

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS.

"My poor flowers are quite dead!" said little Ida. "They were so pretty yesterday, and now all their leaves hang down and wither. Why do they do that?" she asked the student who was sitting on the sofa. She was very fond of the student. He could tell the most delightful stories, and could clip out the funniest figures—hearts with tiny dancing ladies inside them; flowers and large castles with doors that opened and shut. Was there ever such a merry student? "Why do the flowers look so poorly to-day?" she asked again, and showed him a whole bouquet that was quite withered.

"Don't you know what ails them?" said the student. "Well, I'll tell you. The flowers were at a ball last night, that is why they hang their heads."

"But flowers can't dance, I'm sure!" said little Ida.

"Yes," said the student, "when it gets dark, and we are all asleep, they spring about right merrily. Why, they have a ball nearly every mortal night!"

"And can no child go to the ball, too?"

"Oh yes!" said the student; "wee, wee groundsels and lilies of the valley can, certainly."

"Where do the loveliest flowers dance?" asked little Ida.

"Have you ever been inside the gates near the large palace where the King dwells in the summer-time, and where are all the lovely flower-beds with such lots of flowers? You know where the swans are that come swimming to you when you want to give them bread-crumbs? Well, it's there. You could have something like a ball there, I can tell you!"

"I was out in the gardens yesterday with mother," said Ida, "but all the leaves were off the trees, and there was not a single flower left. Where are they all? In the summer-time I saw so many."

"They are inside the palace," said the student; "you must know that as soon as ever the King and all the Court go to town, the flowers immediately run away from the gardens into the palace, and have a fine time of it. That's a sight worth seeing! The two loveliest of the roses sit down upon the throne, and so they are the King and Queen. All the red cockscombs range themselves beside it and stand and bow; they are the gentlemen-in-waiting. Then all the prettiest flowers come dropping in, and then there is a big ball. The blue violets are the midshipmen, and they dance with the hyacinths and crocuses, whom they call Miss. The tulips and the large yellow lilies are the old ladies who take care that the dancing is proper and everything goes off nicely."

"But," asked little Ida, "is there no one who gives the flowers a good scolding for dancing in the King's palace?"

"Nobody knows anything about it, you see," replied the student. "It is true that at night, sometimes, the old seneschal, who has to see to things there, comes round with his big bunch of keys,

but as soon as the flowers hear the keys rattle, they keep quite still, hide themselves behind the long curtains, and pop their heads out. 'There are some flowers here, I can smell 'em,' says the old seneschal; but he cannot see them."

"That *is* funny!" cried little Ida, and clapped her hands. "But couldn't *I* see the flowers, then?"

"Yes," said the student, "when you go there again, remember to peep through the window, and then you'll see them well enough. That's what I did the other day, and I saw a long yellow daffodil lying at full length on the sofa—she thought she was a Court lady."

"And can the flowers in the botanical gardens get in there too? Can they go all that long way?"

"I should rather think so!" said the student, "for they can fly whenever they've a mind too. Haven't you seen the pretty yellow, white, and red butterflies?—they look just like flowers, and they *were* flowers once. They sprang off their stalks and flapped with their leaves just as if they were tiny wings; and then they flew away, and as they held themselves nicely up and did not fall, they got leave to fly about in the daytime as well, instead of going home again and sitting on their stalks; and so their leaves became real wings at last. Why, you've seen that yourself! At the same time, it is quite possible that the flowers in the botanical gardens have never been in the King's palace, or even know that such fun goes on there at night. And now I'll tell you something. You know the Professor of botany who lives close by the gardens? Very well! He would be so surprised if you do what I tell you. When you go into his garden, just you tell one of the flowers that there is a great

ball in the palace; it will be sure to tell all the others, and they will all fly away; so when the Professor comes into the garden he won't find a single flower there, and will not be able to make out whither they all have gone."

"But how can the flower tell it to the others? Flowers can't talk, you know."

"No, they can't exactly talk perhaps," said the student; "but they do everything in pantomime. Have you never noticed that when there's a breeze the flowers nod their heads, and move all their green leaves; it is just as if they were talking."

"Then can the Professor understand pantomime?" asked Ida.

"I should rather think so! Why, one morning he came down into his garden, and saw a large stinging-nettle standing and speaking in pantomime with its leaves to a lovely red pink. It said, 'You *are* so nice, and I am *so* fond of you.' This the Professor could not stand at all, so he immediately struck the stinging-nettle on its leaves (they are its fingers, you know), but it stung him, and since that time he has never dared to touch a stinging-nettle again."

"That *was* funny!" said little Ida, and she laughed.

"Why do you fill the child's head with such stuff?" said the horrid State-councillor who had dropped in to pay a call, and was sitting on the sofa. He could not endure the student, and always snapped and snarled when he clipped out the funny, ridiculous figures —such, for instance, as a man hanging on a gallows and holding a heart in his hand because he had stolen hearts away; or an old witch riding on a broomstick with her husband on her nose. The State-

councillor, I say, could not stand such things, and he always said what he said now, "Why do you fill the child's head with such stuff? It is all silly fancy!"

But to little Ida all that the student told her about the flowers seemed *so* funny, and she thought so much about it. The flowers hung their heads because they were tired out through dancing all night. They were certainly sick. So she went away with them to her other playthings, which stood upon a pretty little table with a drawer quite full of all sorts of finery. In the doll's bed lay her doll, Sophie, asleep, but little Ida said to her, "You must really get up, Sophie, and be satisfied with sleeping in the drawer to-night. The poor flowers are ill, so they must lie in your bed, perhaps that will do them good." So she took up the doll, but it looked so cross and said not a single word, for it was angry because its bed was taken away from it. So Ida laid the flowers in the doll's bed, tucked them well up with the little counterpane, and told them they must lie good and quiet, and she would boil them some tea, that they might get well, and be able to get up in the morning; and she drew the curtains close round the little bed, so that the sun might not shine in their eyes.

All that evening she could not help thinking of what the student had told her, and when her own bedtime came, she insisted, first of all, upon looking behind the curtains which hung down before the windows where her mother's beautiful flowers stood, both hyacinths and tulips, and she whispered quite softly, "I tell you what—you are going to a ball to-night, I know!" The flowers pretended that they did not understand, and never stirred a leaf; but little Ida knew all about it.

When she was put to bed she lay awake a long time thinking how nice it would be to see the pretty flowers dancing inside the King's palace. "I wonder if *my* flowers will be there, too." But then she fell asleep. In the middle of the night she awoke again. She had been dreaming about the flowers and the student whom the State-councillor had snubbed and chided for filling her head with nonsense. It was quite still in the bed-chamber where Ida lay. The night-lamp was shining on the table, and her father and mother were fast asleep. "I wonder if my flowers are still lying in Sophie's bed," she said to herself; "how very much I should like to know!" So she raised herself a little in her bed, and looked towards the door. It stood ajar, beyond it lay the flowers and all her toys. She listened, and then she seemed to hear some one inside the room playing on the piano, but very softly and so nicely that she had never heard anything like it before. "I am certain all the flowers are dancing inside there!" she said. "Oh, how I should like to see it all!" But she dared not get up, for she would have awakened her father and mother. "If they would only come in here!" said she; but the flowers did not come, and the music went on playing. Then she could not stand it any longer, for it was really too lovely, so she crept out of her little bed and went quite softly to the door and peeped into the room. Was there ever anything so funny as what she saw there now?

There was no night-lamp at all in the room, and yet it was quite light; the moon shone through the window on to the middle of the floor; it was almost as bright as day. All the hyacinths and tulips stood in two long rows upon the floor; there was not one of them left on the window-sill, but the empty pots still stood there.

Down upon the floor all the flowers were dancing round with one another so nicely. They formed a regular circle, and held one another by their long green leaves as they swung round. But at the piano sat a large yellow lily, which little Ida had certainly seen in the summer-time, for she recollected quite well that the student had said, "Well now, how like it is to Miss Lina!" Then they had all laughed at him, but now it really seemed to little Ida also as if the long yellow flower was just like Miss Lina, and it went on just as she did when she played, holding its oval yellow face first on one side and then on the other, and beating time to the pretty music. Not one of them observed little Ida. And now she saw a big blue crocus hop on to the middle of the table where the playthings lay, go straight up to the doll's bed, and draw back the curtains. There lay the sick flowers, but they immediately got up and nodded to the others below, which was as much as to say that they wanted to dance too. The old chimney-sweep, whose under jaw was broken off, then stood up and bowed to the pretty flowers; and they didn't look at all sick, but leaped down among the others, and were so happy.

There was a sound of something falling on the floor. Ida looked in that direction and saw that it was the carnival birch-rod which had jumped down; apparently it also belonged to the flowers' party. It also looked very nice, and on top of it sat a little wax doll, which had just such a broad-brimmed hat on its head as the State-councillor used to go about in. The carnival birch-rod trotted along on its three red wooden legs through the very midst of the flowers, and stamped right vigorously, for it was dancing the mazurka, and the flowers could

not dance that dance, because they were too light to stamp properly.

The wax doll on the carnival birch-rod all at once grew big and long, looked round and snarled over the paper flowers beneath him, and cried quite loudly, "Why do you fill the child's head with such nonsense? It is all stupid fancy!" and then the wax doll exactly resembled the State-councillor with the broad-brimmed hat, and looked just as bilious and peevish. But the paper flowers beat his spindle-shanks about, so he retired within himself and became a little bit of a wax doll again. It was such a funny sight that little Ida really could not help laughing. The carnival birch-rod continued to dance, and the State-councillor had to dance too. He couldn't help himself. Whether he swelled out big and lanky, or whether he remained the little yellow wax doll with the big black hat, dance he must. Then the other flowers interceded for him, especially those who had been lying in the doll's bed, and so the carnival birch-rod at last consented to keep quiet. At that moment there was a vigorous knocking inside the drawer where Ida's doll, Sophie, lay with so many other playthings. The chimney-sweep then ran to the corner of the table, lay at full length on his belly, and managed to open the drawer a little way. Then Sophie popped out and looked all around her in great surprise. "Why, there's a ball," said she, "and nobody told me a word about it!"

"Will you dance with me?" said the chimney-sweep.

"With you indeed! A likely tale!" and she turned her back upon him. Then she sat down on the side of the drawer and thought that one of the flowers might come and offer her a dance; but no

one came, so she coughed: "Ahem!" but still no one came. So the chimney-sweep danced all by himself, and he didn't dance so badly either. Now, as none of the flowers seemed to notice Sophie, she let herself fall down from the drawer on to the floor with a great thud, so that there was great consternation, and all the flowers came flocking round her and asked her whether she had hurt herself; and they were all so nice to her, especially the flowers that had lain in her bed. But she had not hurt herself at all, and all the flowers said, "Thank you for the nice bed," and made much of her, leading her into the middle of the floor, where the moon was shining, and danced with her, and all the other flowers formed a circle round them. And now Sophie was very pleased, and she said they were quite welcome to keep her bed, she did not mind sleeping in the drawer a bit. But the flowers said, "Many, many thanks to you! But we sha'n't want it for very long. To-morrow, we shall be quite dead, but say to little Ida that she is to bury us out in the garden where the canary-bird lies, and then we will grow up again in the summer-time and be much prettier."

"No, you must not die!" said Sophie, and she kissed the flowers; and the same instant the door opened and a whole mob of other beautiful flowers came dancing in. Ida could not make out whence they came, they must certainly be all the flowers out of the King's palace. First came two beautiful roses, and they had small gold crowns on their heads; it was a King and a Queen. Then came the nicest stocks and carnations, bowing in every direction. They brought their music with them. Big poppies and peonies blew into pease-pods till they were quite red in the face; and the blue-bells and small white snowdrops jingled as if they were

covered with little bells. It was such funny music. Then came many other flowers, and they all danced together—the blue violets and the red pinks, the daisies and the lilies of the valley. And all the flowers kissed each other : it was such a pretty sight.

At last the flowers said good-night to one another, so little Ida also crept stealthily to bed, where she dreamed of everything she had seen.

When she got up next morning, she went straight to the little table to see if the flowers were still there. She drew aside the curtains of the little bed. Yes, there they all lay, but they were quite withered, much more so than yesterday. Sophie lay in the drawer where she had been put, but she looked very drowsy.

"Do you recollect what you were to tell me?" said little Ida; but Sophie only looked very stupid, and said not a single word.

"You're very naughty!" said little Ida, "and after they all danced with you, too!" Then she took up a little paper box, on which pretty flowers were painted, opened it, and put the dead flowers inside it. "That shall be your pretty coffin; and next time my Norwegian cousins come, they shall help me to bury you in the garden, so that you may grow up again in the summer-time, and be ever so much prettier."

The Norwegian cousins were two sharp lads called Jonas and Adolphus. Their father had given them two new bows, and they brought these with them to show Ida. She told them about the poor flowers that were dead, and they got leave to bury them. The two boys marched in front, with their bows over their shoulders; and little Ida came after, with the dead flowers in the pretty box. Out in the garden a little grave had been dug. Ida kissed the

flowers first, and then put them into the earth with the box; and Adolphus and Jonas fired a salute over the grave with their bows, because they had no guns or cannons.

THE NAUGHTY BOY.

THERE was once upon a time an old poet, and a good old poet he was. He was sitting at home one evening; outside the weather was frightful. The rain fell in torrents, but the old poet sat in the best of humours by his stove, where the fire was burning, and the apples were simmering. "The poor wretches who are out in this weather won't have a dry stitch on their bodies!" said he, for he was such a good old poet.

"Oh, let me in! let me in! I am freezing, and so wet!" cried a little child outside. It cried and knocked at the door, while the rain poured in torrents, and the blast shook all the windows and made them rattle. "Poor little creature!" said the old poet, and he got up to open the door. There stood a little boy. He was quite naked, and the water dripped off his long yellow hair. He was trembling with cold; if he had not been let in he must certainly have died in that bad weather. "You poor little creature!" said the old poet, and took him by the hand. "Come to me and I'll make you warm in no time, and you shall have wine and apples into the bargain, for you are such a pretty boy!"

And a pretty boy indeed he was. His eyes looked like two bright stars, and though the water flowed down his yellow hair, it curled prettily all the same. He looked just like a little cherub, but the cold had taken all the colour out of his cheeks, and he trembled in every limb. He had a pretty bow in his hand, but it was quite spoiled by the rain; and the wet weather had smudged all the colours on the pretty quiver.

The old poet sat down by the stove, took the little boy on his lap, wrung the water from his hair, warmed his hands in his own, and boiled him some sweet wine. Thus he gradually recovered, got back his rosy cheeks, sprang down upon the floor, and danced round and round the old poet.

"What a merry lad you are!" said the old man.

"My name is Cupid!" he replied; "don't you know me? There lies my bow, and I can shoot with it, too, I can tell you! But look! the weather is fine outside now. The moon is shining!"

"But your bow is spoilt!" said the old poet.

"It would be a bad job if it were!" said the little lad, and he took it up and looked at it. "Oh, it is dry already!—and isn't hurt a bit! The string is quite tight. I will try it now." So he spanned the bow, laid an arrow on it, took aim, and shot the good old poet right through the heart. "Now you can see that my bow is not spoiled, can't you?" he said, and ran away laughing loudly. The naughty boy to shoot like that at the good old poet who had invited him into the warm room, and been so good to him, and given him nice wine and the best apples!

The good poet lay upon the floor and groaned, he really was

shot right through the heart. "Fie, fie!" said he, "what a naughty boy that Cupid is! I will tell this to all good children that they may

take care not to play with him, lest he do them a mischief. And all the good children he told it to, both boys and girls, were very

cautious of that wicked Cupid; but he got the better of them for all that, for he is so very wide awake.

When the students are coming from their lectures, he runs beside them with a book under his arm and a black hood on. Of course they cannot recognise him, so they fancy he is a student like themselves, and take his arm, and so he manages to stick his dart into their breasts. When the girls are coming away from confession, or when they are in church, he is after them even then. In fact he is after people at all times. He sits on the big chandelier at the theatre and bursts into full flame, so that the people fancy it is a lamp, but they find out afterwards that it is something very different. He runs about in the King's garden and on the ramparts—nay! once he even shot his own mother and father through the heart. Just ask them, and you'll hear what *they* say. Yes, he is a wicked boy, that fellow Cupid; you must never have anything to do with him, he is after everybody. Why, only fancy! once he actually shot a dart at dear old grandmamma. That was long ago indeed, and it is all over now; but yet she will never forget it. Fie! thou wicked Cupid! But now you know all about him, and can understand what a naughty boy he is.

THE TRAVELLING COMPANION.

Poor John was sorely troubled, for his father was sick unto death. They two were absolutely alone in the little room. The lamp upon the table was just flickering out, and the night was far gone.

"You have been a good son, John," said the sick father; "God will help you on in the world," and he looked at him with grave, gentle eyes, drew a deep, deep breath, and died: it was just as if he had fallen asleep. But John fell a-weeping. He had now no one left in the whole world, neither father nor mother, sister nor brother. Poor John! he knelt before the coffin and kissed the hand of his dead father. Many were the tears he wept; but at last his eyes closed, and he fell asleep with his head upon the hard bed-post. Then he dreamed a wondrous dream. He saw the sun and the moon bow down before him, and he saw his father fresh and hearty again, and he heard him laugh as he used always to laugh when he was pleased. A lovely girl with a gold crown on her long fair hair held out her hand to him, and his father said, "Look what a nice bride you've got! She is the loveliest bride in the whole world." Then he awoke—and all this bliss was gone. His

father lay dead and cold on the bed; there was absolutely no one with them. Poor John!

A week afterwards the dead man was buried. John walked close behind the coffin. He would never see again the kind father who had loved him so much. He heard them throw the earth down on the coffin, he caught sight of the last corner of it, but the next spadeful of earth that was thrown down hid that also. Then his grief overcame him, and his heart was nigh to breaking. Those about the grave sang a hymn, it sounded so prettily, and the tears came into John's eyes: he cried, and it did his heart good. The sun shone beautifully on the green trees, as if it would say, "Don't be so distressed, John! Can't you see how lovely the blue sky is? Your father is up there now, praying to God that things may always go well with you."

"I will always be good," said John; "and then I also shall go to Heaven, and be with father. Oh, how joyful it will be when we see each other again! What a lot I shall have to tell him, and he, too, will show me so many things, and teach me so much about the beauty of Heaven, just as he used to teach me here on earth. Oh, how joyful it will be!"

All this passed so vividly before John's mind that he could not but smile at the thought of it, though the tears were all the time running down his cheeks. The little birds were sitting on the chestnut-trees and twittering, "twee-wit, twee-wit!" They were so happy, though they also had been at the funeral; but they knew well enough that the dead man was now in Heaven, and had wings far finer and larger than theirs, and that he was now happy, because he had been good on earth, and they were quite delighted at the

thought of it. John saw them flit away from the green trees far out into the wide world, and then he also was minded to follow their example. But first he carved a large wooden cross to place over his father's grave, and when he brought it thither in the evening, he found the grave nicely trimmed with sand and flowers. Strangers had done this, for they had loved the dear father who now was dead.

Early next morning John packed up his little bundle, hid in his belt the whole of his patrimony—some fifty rix-dollars[1] and a couple of silver pence—and resolved to seek his fortune in the wide world. But first he went into the churchyard to his father's grave, recited "Our Father," and said, "Farewell, dear dad; I will always be a good man; and oh, pray God that it may be well with me!"

As John went through the fields all the flowers stood so fresh and beautiful in the warm sunshine, and they nodded in the wind as if they would say, "Welcome to the green fields! Is it not lovely here?" But John turned him round once more to look at the church where he, as a little boy, had been christened, and where he had gone every Sunday with his old father and sung hymns; and he saw standing high up in one of the holes of the tower the church-nixey[2] in his little red pointed cap, shading his face with both hands, so that the sun might not shine into his eyes, John nodded farewell to him, and the little nixey swung his red cap, put his hand on his heart, and kissed his fingers to him again and again, to show that he wished him well and a right prosperous journey.

[1] A rix-dollar was worth about 2*s.* 3*d.*

[2] This kind of nixey, the only one which can bear the sound of church-bells, is generally known as the *Kirkegrimme*. *See* Thiele, *Danmark's Folksagn*.

John thought of all the fine things he was going to see in the wide magnificent world, and went farther and farther away, farther than he had ever been before. He knew absolutely nothing of the towns he passed through, or the people he met, he was far away among total strangers. The first night he was obliged to sleep in a hay-stack in the fields, for he had no other bed. Yet it seemed very cosy to him; the King himself could not have been better off. The whole plain, with the river, the hay-stack, and the blue sky above it all—what finer bedchamber could one have? The green grass, with the tiny red and white flowers, was the carpet; the elder-bushes and the hedges of wild roses were the bouquets of flowers on the dressing-table; and for his bath he had the whole river with the clear, fresh water, where the rushes nodded and said both good-morning and good-evening. The moon, high up under the blue ceiling, was a splendid large night-lamp, and it didn't set fire to the curtains either. John could sleep quite comfortably; and so he did, and he only awoke again when the sun rose, and all the little birds round about sang, "Good-morning, good-morning! Are you not up yet?"

The bells were ringing for church: it was Sunday. The people went to hear the parson preach, and John went with them and sang a hymn, and heard God's Word; and it was just as if he were in his own church where he had been christened and had sung hymns with his father. There were so many graves in the churchyard, and some of them were overgrown with tall grass. This made John think of his father's grave. It might get to look like these when he was no longer there to trim and weed it. So he sat him down and plucked off the grass, put up again the wooden crosses that had

fallen down, and put back in their proper places the wreaths which the wind had torn away from the graves, thinking to himself all the while, "Perchance some one will do the same to my father's grave, now that I am far away."

Outside the churchyard stood an old beggar leaning on his staff; John gave him all the little silver coins he had, and then went on his way into the wide world so happy and contented. Towards evening a terrible storm arose. John made haste to get under cover, but dark night had fallen upon him before he came at last to a little church which stood all alone on the top of a little hill. Fortunately the door stood ajar, and he crept in, and determined to stay there till the storm had passed away. "I will lay me down in a corner," said he. "I am quite tired, and feel the want of a little rest." So he sat down, folded his hands, and said his evening prayers; and, before he knew it, he was asleep and dreaming, while outside it was still thundering and lightening. When he awoke again it was midnight, but the storm had passed away, and the moon was shining through the windows upon him. In the middle of the nave stood an open coffin with a dead man in it, for he had not yet been buried. John was not at all afraid, for he had a good conscience; and, besides, he knew that the dead hurt no one; it is living wicked men who do harm. Two such living wicked people stood at that moment beside the dead man who had been placed in the church before being put into his grave; they wanted to do him harm, they would not let him lie in peace in his coffin, but wanted to cast him into the churchyard outside, poor dead man!

"Why do you do that?" asked John; "'tis an evil, wicked deed. Let him sleep in Jesu's name."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the two horrid men; "he has cheated us! He owes us money which he could not pay, and now he has died into the bargain, and so we sha'n't get a farthing. That is why we mean to tear him out of his coffin; he shall lie outside the church-door like a dog."

"I have no more than fifty rix-dollars," said John; "it is my whole inheritance; but I will cheerfully give it to you if you will faithfully promise me to leave the poor dead man in peace. I can get on well enough without the money. I have strong, healthy limbs, and God will always help me."

"Well," said the horrid men, "if you will pay his debts as you say, you may be quite certain that we sha'n't do anything to him;" and so they took the money John gave them, laughed heartily at his softness, and went their way. But John placed the corpse back decently in its coffin, crossed its hands, said farewell, and went with a light heart through the great forest. Wherever the moon managed to shine in through the trees he saw on every side of him the prettiest little elves all playing gaily. They did not mind him in the least, for they knew very well that he was good and guileless, and it is only wicked people who cannot see the elves. Some of them were no bigger than your finger, and had their long yellow hair done up with gold combs. They rocked to and fro in couples on the large dewdrops which lay on the leaves and the tall grass. Sometimes the dewdrops slipped from under them, and down they fell among the long straw stalks, and then there was such laughter and uproar among the other wee mannikins. It was prodigiously funny! Then they began singing, and John recognised at once all the pretty songs he had learnt as a little boy. Big speckled spiders with silver

crowns on their heads had to weave long swinging bridges and palaces from one hedge to the other, which, when the fine dew fell upon them, looked like shining crystal in the bright moonshine ; and thus

it went on till the sun rose. Then the little elves crept into the flower blossoms, and the wind dispersed their bridges and palaces, which then swung to and fro in the air like big spider-webs.

John had just come out of the wood when a strong, manly voice exclaimed behind him, "Hallo, comrade! whither away?"

"Out into the wide world!" said John. "I am a poor fellow without father or mother, but I am sure God will help me."

"I also am going into the wide world," said the man; "shall we two go together?" "With pleasure," said John; so they pursued their way in company, and soon got to like each other very much, for they were both good fellows. But John soon perceived that the stranger was much wiser than he; he had been nearly the whole world over, and there was nothing in existence that he could not tell you something about. The sun was already high when they sat them down under a large tree to eat their breakfast, and the same moment an old woman came up. Oh, she was *so* old, quite crooked in fact, leaned upon a crutch, and had a bundle of firewood on her back, which she had picked up in the wood. Her apron was tucked up, and John saw that three big bundles of bracken and willow twigs were sticking out of it. When she got quite close to them her foot slipped, she fell down and gave a loud shriek, for the poor old woman had broken her leg. John immediately proposed that they should carry her to her home, but the stranger opened his knapsack, took out a jar, and said he there had a salve which would make her leg quite well and sound again in a minute, so that she could go home herself just as if she had never broken her leg at all. In return for this, however, he wanted her to give him the three bundles which she had in her apron.

"You ask a good price," said the old woman, and nodded her head very mysteriously. She would have liked very much to keep her bundles, but it was no joke to lie there with a broken leg,

so she gave him the bundles, and no sooner had he rubbed the salve on her leg, than up sprang the old granny, and went on her way much more briskly than before. A wonderful salve truly, but you could not get it at any apothecary's.

"What do you want with those bundles?" inquired John of his comrade.

"Oh, they are three pretty nosegays!" said he. "I have taken rather a fancy to them, for I am a strange sort of fellow." So they went on a bit farther.

"Why, how overcast it is getting!" said John, and pointed ahead of him. "There are some terribly big clouds over there."

"Nay," said his travelling companion, "those are not clouds, they are mountains, the beautiful big mountains where one can get right above the clouds into the bracing air; and splendid it is, I can tell you! To-morrow we shall certainly be a good step on our journey into the wide world."

The mountains were nothing like so close as they seemed. It took them a whole day to get to the spot where the black woods grew right up against the sky, and where there were stones as big as a whole town. A stiff pull it would be before they could get right up there, and therefore John and his travelling companion went first of all into an inn to have a good rest and brace themselves up for their journey on the morrow. A crowd of people was assembled in the tap-room, for there was a puppet-show man there. He had just set up his little theatre, and the people sat all round to see the play; but a fat old butcher had taken the front seat, which was by far the best. His big bulldog—ugh! how grim it looked—sat by his side and glared at all the company.

And now the play began, and a very pretty play it was, with a King and a Queen who sat upon a velvet throne, had gold crowns on their heads, and long trains behind their robes, for they could afford it. The prettiest dolls with glass eyes and large whiskers stood at all the doors, and opened and shut them continually so as to let fresh air into the room. It was quite a pretty play, and not at all sad; but just as the Queen arose and was walking across the stage, then—Heaven only knows what the bulldog was thinking about! but, anyhow, as the fat butcher was not holding him, he made one bound into the middle of the stage, and seized the Queen round the waist, so that it went "Knick! Knack!" It was a horrible sight!

The poor man who was acting the whole play was frightened and distressed about his Queen, for she was the prettiest doll he had; and now the ugly bulldog had bitten her head off. But when all the people had gone away the stranger who had come with John said that he would soon make her all right again, and so he took out his jar and smeared the doll with the salve he had helped the poor old woman with when she had broken her leg. As soon as ever the doll was rubbed she became all right again at once—nay! she could now move all her limbs about herself, you had not even to pull the string. The doll became like a living creature, except that it could not talk. The man who had the little puppet theatre was delighted. He now had no need to hold the doll at all. It could dance of its own accord.

Now when it was night, and all the people in the inn had gone to bed, somebody was heard to sigh so lamentably, and kept it up so long, that every one else got up to see what it could be.

The man who had acted the play went to his little theatre, for it was from thence that the sighing seemed to come. All the wooden dolls lay higgledy-piggledy; the King and his guards all mixed up together, and it was they who were sighing so piteously and staring with their big glass eyes, for they wanted so much to be rubbed with the ointment like the Queen, that they also might be able to move about of their own accord. The Queen sank down upon her knees, and held her pretty gold crown up in the air while she seemed to pray, "Oh take it, take it, but anoint my consort and my courtiers!" Then the poor man who owned the play and all the puppets could not help weeping, for it made him feel so sorry for them all. He promised to give the travelling companion all the money he took for his play next evening if only he would smear four or five of his prettiest dolls with the ointment. But the travelling companion said that all he asked in return was the big sword that hung by the man's side; and when he had got it, he smeared six dolls with the ointment, and they immediately fell a-dancing so prettily that all the girls—the living, human girls who were looking on—fell a-dancing as well. The coachman and the scullery-maid, the lacquey and the parlour-maid danced together, and all the strangers followed suit, and the poker and tongs likewise; but the last two tumbled down at the very first caper. Oh, it was a merry night!

Next morning John left them all and went right away with his comrade up the high mountains and through the large pine forests. They went so high up that the church towers far below looked just like small red berries in the midst of all the green, and they could see far, far away many, many a mile, where they

had never yet been. John had never in his life seen so much of the beautiful world at one time, and the sun shone so warmly from out of the fresh blue sky. He heard, too, the hunters blowing their horns among the mountains, and it was so lovely and blissful that the water came into his eyes for joy, and he could not help saying, "O God, how good Thou art! I could kiss Thee, because Thou art so good to us all, and hast given us as our own all the beauty that is in the world."

His companion, too, stood with folded hands and gazed away over wood and town in the warm sunshine. At that moment there was a wondrously beautiful sound high over their heads. They looked up into the air; a large white swan was sweeping through the sky. It was so beautiful, and it sang as they never heard a bird sing before; but it gradually grew weaker and weaker, bowed its head, and at last sank quite slowly down at their feet, where it lay dead—the lovely bird!

"Two such beautiful big white wings as that bird has got are worth money," said the travelling companion, "and I mean to take them with me. Now you can see what a good thing it was I took the sword," and with that he cut off both the swan's wings at one blow, for he meant to keep them.

And now they journeyed many and many a mile across the mountains, till at last they saw before them a large city with many hundreds of towers, which shone like silver in the sunlight. In the midst of the city was a splendid marble palace covered with real gold, and there dwelt the King. John and his travelling companion would not go into the city at once, but stopped at an inn outside to smarten themselves up, for they wanted to

look nice when they walked about the streets. The host told them that the King was such a good man who never harmed any one; but his daughter—God preserve us!—she was indeed a wicked Princess. She was beautiful enough, indeed no one could be so pretty and captivating as she; but what was the good of that when she was a vile, wicked witch, through whose fault so many handsome Princes had lost their lives? She had given every one leave to woo her; anybody might come forward; whether he was Prince or beggar, it was all the same, he had only to guess three things she asked him. If he could guess them she would marry him, and he would reign over the whole land when her father died. But if he could not guess these three things, she had him hanged or beheaded, so evil and wicked was this lovely Princess. Her father, the old King, was sore afflicted at this state of things, but he could not prevent her from being so wicked, for he had once said that he would have nothing whatever to do with her lovers, she could do what she liked in that matter. Hitherto, every Prince who had tried to guess the questions so as to win the Princess had always failed, and so had either been hanged or beheaded, and yet he had always been warned beforehand not to woo. The old King was so grieved at all the sorrow and misery caused thereby that once a year he knelt down all day with his soldiers and prayed that the Princess might become good; but this she absolutely refused to be, and the old women who drank brandy dyed it quite black before they drank it by way of mourning, for what else could they do?

"The nasty Princess!" said John, "she should really have the birch-rod; it would do her good! If only I were the old

King, she should bleed for it yet!" At that moment they heard the people outside cry "Hurrah!" The Princess was passing by, and she really was so lovely that all the people forgot how wicked she was, and so they cried "Hurrah!" Fresh, lovely maidens, all in white silk gowns with golden tulips in their hands, rode on coal-black horses by her side. The Princess herself had a chalk-white horse bedizened with diamonds and rubies; her riding-habit was of pure gold, and the whip she had in her hand looked like a sunbeam; the gold crown on her head was as if made of little stars taken from the sky; and her mantle was embroidered with the wings of thousands and thousands of little butterflies. At the same time, she was ever so much lovelier than her raiment.

When John caught sight of her, he turned as red in the face as a drop of blood, and could scarcely utter a single word. The Princess looked exactly like the beautiful girl with the gold crown on he had dreamed about on the night his father died. He thought her so beautiful, and could not help loving her. It was certainly not true, said he, that she could be an evil witch who had people hanged or beheaded when they could not guess what she asked them. "Every one, they say, even the poorest beggar, has leave to woo her; then I, too, will go up to the palace, because I really can't help it."

Every one said that he ought not to do so. He would certainly fare as all the others had done. His travelling companion also dissuaded him, but John declared that it would all come right, brushed his shoes and jacket, washed his face and hands, combed his beautiful yellow hair, and so went quite alone into the city and up

to the palace. "Come in!' said the old King when John knocked at the door. John opened the door, and the old King, in a dressing-gown and embroidered slippers, came to meet him. He had his gold crown upon his head, his sceptre in one hand and the orb in the other. "Wait a bit," said he, and he shoved the orb under one arm, so as to be able to shake hands with John. But as soon as he understood that it was another wooer, he began to weep so violently that the sceptre and orb fell upon the floor, and he had to dry his tears in his dressing gown. Poor old King!

"Don't do it," said he; "it will go badly with you as with all the others. Well, you shall just see for yourself!" so he led John into the Princess's pleasure-garden. Oh, what a horrible sight! On every tree

hung three or four kings' sons who had wooed the Princess, but had been unable to guess the things she had asked them. Every time the wind blew, all their bones rattled so that the small birds were scared away and never dared to come into the garden. All the flowers were tied to dead men's bones instead of sticks, and grinning skulls stood in all the flower-pots. That was a nice garden for a Princess!

"Look there now!" said the old King, "so it will fare with you as with all the others you see here. Give up the idea, do! You make me positively wretched; I take it so much to heart."

John kissed the hand of the good old King, and said that it would all come right in the end, for he was so fond of the lovely Princess. At the same moment the Princess herself came riding into the courtyard with all her ladies, so they went out to meet her, and said good-day. She was lovely indeed, and she held out her hand to John, who loved her more than ever. She surely could never be the evil, wicked witch that all the people said she was! They went up into the drawing-room, and the little pages presented them with sweetmeats and gingerbread-nuts. But the old King was so grieved that he absolutely could not eat anything; and, besides, the gingerbread-nuts were too tough for his teeth.

It was now arranged that John was to come up to the palace again next morning, when the Judges and the whole Senate would be gathered together to hear how he got on with the guessing. If he got through with it, he was to come twice more, but hitherto there had never been any one who had guessed the first time, and so

they had all lost their lives. John was not a bit anxious as to how he should fare; he was in the best of humours, thought of nothing but the charming Princess, and believed firmly that God would help him somehow, but how he had no idea, nor would he even bestow a single thought upon it. He actually danced along the highway as he went back to his inn, where his travelling companion awaited him.

John could not find words adequately to express how nice the Princess had been to him, and how beautiful she was. He longed already for the next day to come that he might go to the palace again and try his luck at guessing. But his travelling companion shook his head and was very sad. "I am so fond of you," said he, "and we might have been companions together for a long time to come yet. Poor, dear John! I could weep my eyes out, but I won't spoil the last evening, perhaps, that we shall ever spend together. We will be merry, right merry. To-morrow when you are gone I shall have cause to weep!"

All the people in the city had immediately got to know that a new wooer had arrived, and accordingly there was great lamentation. The theatre was closed, all the cake-women tied pieces of crape round their sugar-pigs, the King and the priests knelt in the church; there was such a lamentation, for how could it possibly fare better with John than with all the wooers who had gone before him? Towards evening the travelling companion brewed a large bowl of punch, and said to John that they would now be jolly together and drink the Princess's health. But when John had drunk two glasses he became so drowsy that he could not keep his eyes open, so he fell fast asleep. The travelling companion lifted him very

softly from the chair and laid him on the bed; and when it was night and quite dark, he took the two large wings which he had cut off the swan, bound them tightly to his shoulders, put in his pocket the largest of the bundles of birches which he had got from the old woman who had fallen and broken her leg, opened the window, and flew away over the city straight to the palace, where he crouched down in a corner just under the window which looked into the Princess's bedroom.

The whole city lay in silence when the clock struck a quarter to twelve. Then the window flew open, and the Princess flew out in a large white cape, and with long black wings, right across the town to a large mountain; but the travelling companion made himself invisible, so that she could not see him at all, flew behind her, and whipped the Princess with his birches till he drew blood. Ugh! that was something like a flight through the air! The wind caught her cape, so that it bulged out on all sides like a huge sail, and the moon shone through it. "How it hails! how it hails!" said the Princess at every blow she got from the birches, and she had quite enough of it, too! At last she came right up to the mountain-side, and knocked. There was a rolling sound like thunder, while the mountain opened and the Princess went in, the travelling companion following after, for absolutely no one could see him—he was invisible. They went through a large, long passage where the walls sparkled most wondrously; there were thousands and thousands of red-hot spiders there that ran up and down the walls, and glowed like fire. And now they came to a large room built of gold and silver. Flowers as large as sunflowers, red and blue, gleamed on the walls; but none could pluck these flowers, for their

stalks were nasty, venomous serpents, and the blossoms were the flames which came out of the serpents' mouths. The atmosphere was all full of shining glow-worms and sky-blue bats, which flapped their gossamer wings to and fro. It was indeed a strange sight. In the middle of the floor was a throne supported by four skeleton horses, with a harness of fiery-red spiders. The throne itself was of milk-white glass, and the cushions were small black mice, which bit each other in the heel continually. Above the throne was a canopy of rosy-red spider-webs, sewn with the prettiest small green flies, which sparkled like precious stones. In the midst of the throne sat an old Troll, with a crown upon his hideous head and a sceptre in his hand. He kissed the Princess on the forehead, invited her to sit down beside him on the gorgeous throne, and now the music began. Big black grasshoppers played on the Jew's harp, and the owl beat his stomach with his wings to supply the place of the drum. It was a ridiculous concert. Wee, wee nixies with will-o'-the-wisps in their caps danced round and round the room. No one could see the travelling companion; he had posted himself right behind the throne, and heard and saw everything. The courtiers—for they also now came in—were so smart and distinguished-looking; but any one who had eyes to see, could perceive soon enough what sort of people *they* were. They were neither more nor less than broomsticks with cabbage-heads on, who had been vivified by the magic spells of the Troll, and dressed up in fine brocaded garments. But that didn't matter a bit, they were only there for show. So there was a little dancing, and after that the Princess told the Troll that she had got a new wooer, and therefore wanted to know what question she should put to him when he came up to the palace

next morning. "Listen!" said the Troll, "and I'll tell you. You must choose something very easy, and then it will never occur to him. Think of your own slipper; he won't guess that. Then have his head cut off; but when you come out again to me to-morrow night, don't forget to bring me his eyes, for I want to eat them!" The Princess curtseyed very low, and said she would not forget the eyes; then the Troll opened the mountain, and she flew home again. But the travelling companion followed after and flogged her so vigorously with the birches that she groaned at the violence of the hailstorm, and hastened as fast as she could to get to her bedroom again through the window; but the travelling companion flew back to the inn where John was still sleeping, unloosed his wings, and laid himself down also upon the bed, for he must have been very tired, to say the least of it.

It was quite early in the morning when John awoke. The travelling companion rose at the same time, and told him that he had dreamed a very strange dream that night, about the Princess and one of her shoes, and bade him therefore ask, when it came to the point, whether the Princess had not thought of one of her own shoes. This indeed was what he had heard from the Troll in the mountain; but he would not tell John anything about that, but simply bade him ask if she had not thought of one of her slippers. "I may just as well ask about that as about anything else," said John; "you may perhaps have dreamt the right answer after all, for I believe that God helps me at all times. At the same time, however, I will bid you farewell; for if I guess wrong, I shall never see you more." So they kissed each other, and John went to the city, and up to the palace.

The whole of the grand saloon was quite full of people. The Judges sat in easy-chairs, and they rested their heads on eider-down cushions, because they had so much to think about. The old King stood up and dried his eyes with a white pocket-handkerchief. And now the Princess entered; she was even lovelier than yesterday, and saluted them all so sweetly; but to John she gave her hand, and said, "Good-morning to you!" And now John had to guess what she was thinking about. Heavens! how kindly she looked; but the instant she heard him say that one word "slipper," her face became chalky white, and she trembled in every limb; but it profited her nothing, for he had guessed rightly.

Bless me! how glad the old King was. He cut capers till the boards rocked again, and all the people clapped their hands for him and John, who had thus guessed rightly for the first time. The travelling companion beamed with joy when he heard how well it had all gone off; but John clasped his hands and thanked God, who, he felt sure, would help him the two remaining times. The second guessing was then fixed for the following day.

The same thing happened that evening as on yesternight. When John fell asleep, his travelling companion flew after the Princess into the mountain, and flogged her even harder than the first time, for he took *two* bundles of birches with him on this occasion. Nobody could see him, and he heard everything. The Princess was to think of her glove, and he told this to John just as if he had dreamt it again, so John was able to guess aright—and oh, what joy there was in the Palace! The whole Court cut capers just as they had seen the King do the first time, but the Princess

lay upon the sofa and would not say a single word. Now all depended upon whether John would guess rightly the third time. If things went well, he was to have the lovely Princess and inherit the whole kingdom when the old King died; but if he guessed wrongly, he would lose his life, and the Troll would eat his beautiful blue eyes.

The evening before, John went early to bed, said his prayers, and then dropped off into a sweet sleep; but the travelling companion bound the wings to his shoulders, fastened his sword by his side, took all three bundles of birches with him, and then flew to the palace. It was a pitch-black night. The storm raged so that the tiles flew from the roofs of the houses, and the trees in the garden where the skeletons hung swayed to and fro like reeds in the blast. The lightning flashed every moment, and the thunder rolled till it seemed like a single peal lasting through the livelong night. And now the window sprang open and the Princess flew out. She was as pale as death, but she laughed at the bad weather, it didn't seem rough enough for her, and her white cape whirled round in the air like a huge sail; but the travelling companion scourged her with his three bundles of birches till her blood dripped down upon the ground, and she could scarcely fly any farther. At last, however, she came to the mountain. "How it hails and blows!" she cried; "never have I been out in such weather before!" "Yes," said the Troll, "one may have too much of a good thing!" And then she told him that John had guessed aright the second time also. If he did so again on the morrow, victory would be his, and she could never come out to the Troll in the mountain again, and would never again be able to practise her enchantments as heretofore, whereupon she was sore

distressed. "He will not be able to guess this time," said the Troll. "I will find something the thought of which has never entered his head, unless he be an even greater magician than I am. But now, let us be merry!" and with that he took the Princess by both hands, and they danced round and round with all the little nixies and will-o'-the-wisps that were in the room; and the red spiders ran up and down the walls with equal glee; the fire-flowers glowed and sparkled, the owl beat the drum, the crickets piped, and the grasshoppers blew upon their Jews' harps. It was a right merry ball. When the dance had lasted some time, the Princess declared she must go home or she would be missed at the palace. The Troll said he would go with her, so that they might have a little more time together. Away they flew through the bad weather, and the travelling companion beat his birches to shreds on their backs. Never had the Troll been out in such a hailstorm. Outside the palace he bade the Princess farewell, and the same instant he whispered softly to her, "Think of my head!" but the travelling companion heard it all the same, and at the very moment when the Princess glided through the window into her bedroom, and the Troll was about to turn back again, he seized him by his long black beard and hewed off his hideous trollish head close up to his shoulders before the Troll himself was well aware of it. He hurled the body down into the sea for the fishes, but the head he merely dipped once or twice in the water, and then he tied it up in his silk pocket-handkerchief, and took it home with him to the inn, and laid him down to sleep. Next morning he gave the pocket-handkerchief to John, but told him not to unloose it till the Princess herself asked him what it was she was thinking of.

There were so many in the grand saloon in the Palace that they stood as close together as radishes tied up in a bundle. The Council sat in their chairs with the soft cushions, and the old King had new clothes on, and his gold crown and sceptre had been well furbished up for the occasion and looked splendid; but the Princess was quite pale, and had on a coal-black dress, just as if she were going to a funeral.

"What have I been thinking of?" said she to John, and straightway he loosed the pocket-handkerchief, and was quite terrified himself when he saw the hideous Troll's head. Every one shuddered, for it was indeed a terrible sight; but the Princess sat there like a stone statue and could not utter a single word. At last she got up and gave John her hand because he had guessed aright; there was no denying it. She looked neither to the right nor to the left, but sighed from the bottom of her heart and said: "You are now my lord and master! This evening we will celebrate our wedding!"

"I don't object," said the old King; "we would have it so!" All the people then cried "Hurrah!" the guards on duty played music in the streets, the bells rang, and the cake-women took the crape off their sugar-pigs, for the joy was universal. Three oxen roasted whole and stuffed full with geese and pullets were placed in the middle of the market-place, and every one could come and help himself. The fountains ran with wine of the best sort; and every one who bought a halfpenny roll at the baker's received six large buns into the bargain, and buns with raisins in them too! In the evening the whole town was illuminated, and the soldiers fired their guns, and the boys let off crackers, and in the palace

there was no end of eating, and drinking, and toasting, and dancing, and all the fine gentlemen and lovely young ladies danced with each other, and you could hear them singing ever so far off.

But the Princess was a witch still for all that, and cared not an atom for John. The travelling companion did not forget this, and he therefore gave John three feathers from the swan's wings, and a little flask with some drops in it, and he told him to place by the side of the bridal-bed a large vat full of water, and just as the Princess was about to get into bed, he was to give her a little shove so that she should fall into the water, when he was to duck her three times, taking care first of all, however, to throw the feathers and the drops in. In that way the enchantment would be broken, and she would get to be very fond of him. John did all that his travelling companion had advised him. The Princess shrieked quite loudly when he ducked her under the water, and wriggled between his hands like a huge coal-black swan with sparkling eyes. When she came up to the surface of the water the second time, the swan was white, with the exception of a single black ring round its neck. John prayed devotedly to God, and let the water gurgle for the third time over the bird's head, whereupon it immediately changed into the loveliest of Princesses. She was even handsomer than before, and thanked him with tears in her beautiful eyes for breaking her spells. Next morning the old King came in state with his whole Court, and the ceremony of congratulation lasted all day. Last of all came the travelling companion, staff in hand, with his knapsack over his shoulder. John kissed him again and again, and said he must not go away, but must stay with

him, for all his good fortune was owing to him; but the travelling companion shook his head, and said to him very gently and kindly, "Nay, for my time is now up. I have only paid my debts. Do you recollect the dead man to whom evil-doers would have done a mischief? You gave all you had that he might have rest in his grave. That dead man is myself!" and he was straightway gone.

The wedding lasted a whole month. John and the Princess loved each other dearly, and the old King lived many happy days and let their wee, wee children ride-a-cockhorse on his knee and play with his sceptre; but John reigned over the whole realm.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES.

MANY years ago there lived an Emperor who was so prodigiously fond of nice new clothes that he spent all his money in having himself really properly dressed. He cared not a straw for his soldiers; he cared not a straw for going to the theatre or driving in the park; all he really cared about was showing his fine new clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day; and just as in other places men speak of the "King in Council," so here men spoke of the "Emperor in Wardrobe."

The great city where he dwelt was a very pleasant place to live in. Many strangers visited it every day, and one day two impostors arrived who gave themselves out for weavers, and said they knew how to weave the most beautiful cloth imaginable. Not only were the colours and patterns something altogether out of the common, but the clothes made from such cloth had the peculiar property of being invisible to every man who was either unfit for his office or insufferably stupid.

"They would indeed be something like nice clothes," thought the Emperor. "By wearing them, I could discover which of my

ministers are unfit for the posts they occupy. I could distinguish the wise from the stupid. Yes; some of that cloth must be woven for me at once." And he gave the two impostors a lot of money in advance so that they might begin their work.

Accordingly they set up two looms and pretended that they were working, but there was absolutely nothing upon the looms. Very soon they demanded the finest silk and the purest gold, which they put into their own pockets, and worked on with the empty looms till late into the night.

"Now, I should just like to know how the manufacture of the cloth is progressing," thought the Emperor; but really and truly his heart a little misgave him when he reflected that the stupid or the incapable would not be able to see this cloth. He fancied, indeed, that he had no need to be anxious on his own account in this respect, but still he wanted to send some one else first of all to see how things went. Every person throughout the city knew of the wonderful power of the new cloth, and they were all very eager to see how foolish or stupid their neighbours were.

"I will send my capable old minister to the weavers," thought the Emperor; "he can best see what the cloth looks like, for he is a man of intellect, and none is fitter for his office than he."

So the able old minister went into the room where the two impostors sat working at the empty looms. "God preserve us!" thought the old minister, and opened his eyes very wide, "I can't see anything." But he did not say so.

The two impostors begged him to draw nearer, and asked him if the pattern was not a pretty one, and the colours exquisite.

Then they pointed at the empty looms, and the poor old minister opened his eyes wider and wider, but he could see nothing, for there was nothing to see. "Good gracious!" thought he, "I am not stupid, surely? I never thought so before, and I'll take good care that nobody shall know it now. What! I am not fit for my office, eh? Oh no, it will never do for me to go and say that I can't see the cloth!"

"Well, have you nothing to say about it?" said one of the weavers.

"Oh, it is beautiful! absolutely the neatest thing in the world!" said the old minister, and he took out his glasses. "What a pattern! And those colours, too! Yes, I'll tell the Emperor that it pleases me immensely!"

"Well, we are pleased with it too," said the two weavers; and now they named the colours in detail, and described the pattern. The old minister carefully took in all they said, so as to be able to repeat the same thing when he returned to the Emperor, which he accordingly did.

And now the impostors demanded more money, more silk, and more gold; they required the gold for the weaving, they said. They stuck everything into their own pockets, not so much as a thread passed over the looms; but they continued as before to weave away upon the empty looms.

In a very short time the Emperor sent another very able official to see how the weaving was getting on, and if the cloth was nearly ready. It fared with him as with the minister. He gazed and gazed, but as there was nothing there but the empty loom, he naturally saw nothing.

"A pretty piece of cloth, isn't it? said the two impostors, and pointed out the pretty patterns of which there was absolutely no trace.

"Surely I am not stupid!" thought the man. "Not fit for my good post, eh! A pretty joke, I must say, but I must not let it be noticed!" So he praised the cloth he did not see, and congratulated them on the beautiful colours and the lovely patterns. "Yes, it is perfectly enchanting!" said he to the Emperor.

All the people in the town were talking of the splendid cloth.

And now the Emperor wanted to see it while it was still upon the loom. With a whole host of the *élite* of his realm, among whom were the two able old officials who had been there before, he went to see the two crafty impostors, who were now working with all their might, but without a stitch or thread.

"Now, is it not *magnifique?*" said the two skilful officials. "Will your Majesty deign to observe what patterns, what colours are here?" and they pointed at the empty looms, for they took it for granted that the others could see the cloth.

"Why, what is this?" thought the Emperor. "I don't see anything! How horrible! Am I stupid then? Am I unfit to be Emperor? That would be the most frightful thing that could happen to me! Oh, it is very fine!" said the Emperor aloud. "It has my most gracious approbation!" and he nodded his head approvingly, and contemplated the empty loom. He would not say that he could not see anything. His whole suite stared and stared; they could make no more of it than the rest, but they repeated after the Emperor, "Oh, it is very fine!" and they

advised him to wear clothes made of this new and gorgeous cloth for the first time on the occasion of the grand procession which was about to come off. "It is *magnifique*, most elegant, excellent!" went from mouth to mouth. They were all so mightily delighted with it, and the Emperor gave each of the impostors a ribbon and cross to wear in his button-hole, and the title of gentleman-weaver.

On the eve of the procession the impostors sat up all night, and had more than sixteen candles lit. The people could see that they were busy getting ready the Emperor's new clothes. They pretended to take the cloth from the loom, they clipped the air with large scissors, and they sewed with needles without thread, and at last they said, "There, the clothes are now quite ready!"

The Emperor, with his most elegant cavaliers, then came to them himself, and the impostors held out their arms as if they were holding something at arm's length and said, "Look, here are the trousers, and here is the coat, and here the mantle. They are as light as gossamer," they continued, "you would fancy you had nothing on at all, but that's just the beauty of them!"

"Of course!" said all the gentlemen-in-waiting; but they could see nothing, for there was nothing to see.

"And now, if your Imperial Majesty would most graciously deign to take your clothes off," said the impostors, "we will put on the new ones for your Majesty. In front of the large mirror, please! Thank you!"

The Emperor took off all his clothes, and the impostors pretented to give him the newly-sewn ones piece by piece, and

they smoothed down his body, and they tied something fast which was supposed to be the train, and the Emperor turned and twisted himself in front of the mirror.

"Heaven help us! What a good suit it is! How nicely it fits!" they all cried with one voice. "What a pattern! What colours! It is a splendid dress!"

"The canopy which is to be borne over your Majesty in the procession is waiting outside," the master of the ceremonies announced.

"All right," said the Emperor; "I am quite ready. Does it fit well?" And so he turned himself round once more before the mirror, to make believe that he was now taking a general survey of his splendour. The gentlemen-in-waiting, who had to bear his train, fumbled with their hands along the floor as if they were taking the train up, and as they went along they held their hands in the air, for they dared not let it be supposed that they saw nothing. And thus the Emperor marched in the procession beneath the beautiful canopy, and every one in the streets and in the windows said, "Gracious! how perfect the Emperor's new clothes are! What a beautiful train his mantle has! How splendidly it fits!" No one would have had it supposed that he saw nothing, for then he would certainly have been unfit for his post, or very stupid. None of the Emperor's clothes had been so successful as these!

"Why, he's got nothing on!" said a little child. "Good heavens! listen to the voice of innocence!" said the father; but every man whispered to his neighbour what the child had said. "He has nothing on! There is a little child here who says he has nothing on!"

"He really has nothing on!" cried the whole crowd at last. And the Emperor shrank within himself, for it seemed to him that they were right, but he thought at the same time, "At any rate I must go through with this procession!" And so he put on a still haughtier air, and the gentlemen-in-waiting marched behind and held the train which wasn't there at all.

THE MARSH KING'S DAUGHTER.

The storks tell their little ones so many tales all about the moors and the fens, and these tales are generally adapted to the age and the wits of the hearers. The youngest storks are content with being told: "Cribbly-crabbly, plurry-murry." They consider this capital; but the elder ones want a deeper meaning, or at least something about the family. Of the two oldest and longest tales which have been preserved among the storks, we all know the one about Moses, who was put by his mother in the waters of the Nile; found by the King's daughter; got a good education and became a great man; and was afterwards buried no man knows where. That tale is generally known. The other tale is not known even now, possibly because it is only found in those parts. This tale has been handed down from stork-mother to stork-mother for hundreds of years, and each one of them has told it better and better, and we'll tell it now best of all.

The first pair of storks who came with it, and lived through it, had their summer residence on the Viking's log-house on the "Wild Moss" of Vendsyssel, which is in Hjöring county,

right up towards the Skaw in Jutland, if we must speak by the book. There is still a vast moor there; you can read all about it in the county topography. This spot was once a sea-bottom, which was upheaved, and has remained there ever since, stretching away for miles, and surrounded on all sides by moist meadows and quicksands covered with peat, bilberries, and scrub; a mist is nearly always sweeping over it, and seventy years ago a wolf might still have been found there. It is well called the "Wild Moss," and one can imagine how wild it must have been, and how many swamps and tarns were there, a thousand years ago. Yes, and in its separate features it was practically the same then as it is now. The reeds had the same height, the same kind of long leaves, and the same violet-brown feathery flowers as they bear now; the birch stood there, with its white bark and delicate, loosely hanging leaves, just as it does now; and as for living things that came thither, the fly wore his gauze clothing of the same cut as now, and the stork's livery was black and white with red stockings; but, on the other hand, men in those days had coats of another cut than they have nowadays; but it fared with every one of them, whether thrall or huntsman, who ventured upon the quagmire a thousand years ago, as it fares with those who go there nowadays—they plumped in, and sank right down to the Marsh King, as they called him, who ruled the whole of the moorland realm down below. He might also have well been called the Quagmire King, but we think it best to call him the Marsh King, especially as that is what the storks also called him. Very little is known about his dominion, and it is well, perhaps, that it is so.

Hard by the heath, close up to the Liimfjord, lay the Viking's log-house, with its stone-paved cellars, tower, and three stories; on the top of the roof the stork had built its nest, the stork-mother was sitting on her eggs, and was quite certain that the hatching would be a great success.

One afternoon the stork-father was somewhat longer out of doors than usual, and when he came home he looked quite rumpled and flurried. "I have something quite frightful to tell you," said he to the stork-mother.

"Don't let me hear it then," said she. "Recollect that I am hatching my eggs, I might take harm from it, and that would affect the eggs."

"You must know it," said he; "*she* has come hither, the daughter of our host in Egypt. She has ventured to travel all the way hither, and she is lost."

"She who is of the fairy race? Tell me all about it! Don't keep me in suspense! You know I can't bear it at hatching time!"

"Well, mother, 'tis like this. She believed what the doctor said, just as you told me she would—she believed that the marsh-flowers up here might help her sick father—and she has flown in featherskin with the two other featherskin Princesses, who are bound to come northwards every year to bathe and renew their youth. She has come, and she has disappeared."

"Don't be so long-winded," said the stork-mother, "the eggs might catch cold. I can't bear to be kept in suspense."

"I have been on the look-out," said the stork-father, "and this evening I went among the reeds where the quagmire could bear me; at that moment three swans came along; there was something about

their flight which said to me, 'Look out! that is not altogether swan, that is only swanskin.' You know the sort of feeling I mean, mother, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said she, "but go on about the Princess, I am tired of hearing about swanskin."

"You know that it's just like a lake in the middle of the moor," continued the stork-father; "you can see a bit of it from here if you'll just shift yourself a little. There, in the direction of the reeds and green quagmire lay a large alder-stump; on the stump the three swans sat them down, flapped their wings, and looked around them; one of them threw off her swanskin, and I recognised in her our house-Princess from Egypt. There she sat, and had no other mantle round her but her long black hair. I heard her tell the two others to keep an eye upon her swanskin when she had ducked under the water to pluck the flower she thought she saw. They nodded, and fluttered and lifted the loose feather-jacket. 'I wonder what they're going to do with it,' said I; and she evidently was asking them the same question; and the answer she got was in signs not words, for up they flew in the air with her featherskin. 'Duck down!' they cried, 'you shall never fly again in your swanskin! You shall never see the land of Egypt! Stick in the wild heath, that's the proper place for you!' And then they ripped her featherskin into a hundred pieces, so that the feathers flew all about like snowflakes, and away they flew, the nasty, dirty Princesses!"

"It is horrible!" said the stork-mother. "I can't bear to hear it; but tell me, now, what happened after that."

"The Princess sobbed and cried. The tears rolled down upon the alder stump, and then it moved, for it was the Marsh King himself

who dwells in the fens. I saw how the stump turned over, and then there was no stump, but a stretching up of long miry branches like arms. Then the poor child grew frightened, and rushed away upon the rocking quagmire ; but it could not bear me there, still less her; she sank immediately, and the alder-stump went down along with her. It was he, indeed, who was haling her away. Then big black bubbles rose to the surface, and then there was not a trace of anything left. Now she is buried in the wild swamp ; never will she come with her flowers to the land of Egypt. Such a sight would have been too much for you, mother, indeed it would !"

"You ought not to tell me about such things just now! It may affect the eggs. The Princess will take care of herself. She's sure to get help. If it had been I or you, or one of our sort, it would have been all up with us."

"I'll keep a look-out every day, all the same!" said the stork-father; and he did so.

And now a long time passed by.

One day, however, he saw a green stalk shoot up from the very bottom of the water, and when it reached the surface it put forth a leaf which grew ever broader and broader. Presently, close to it appeared a bud, and as the stork was flying over it early one morning, the flower-bud opened to the intense warmth of the sunbeams, and in the midst of it lay a pretty child, a little girl just as if she had stepped out of a bath. To such a degree did she resemble the Princess from Egypt that at first the stork fancied it was really she grown little again; but when he thought the matter over, he found it more reasonable to suppose that she was the daughter of the Princess and the Marsh King: that was why she lay in a water-lily. "And there she may stay," thought the stork. "In my nest there are too many already; but an idea occurs to me. The Viking's wife has no child; at one time she desired a little one. I know I often get the blame for bringing these wee things, but this time, at any rate, I'll deserve it. I will fly with the child to the Viking's wife. How delighted she will be!"

And the stork took the little girl, flew to the log-house, knocked a hole through the skin-panes with his beak, laid the child on the breast of the Viking's wife, and then

flew away to the stork-mother, and told her all about it. And the little storks listened, too: they were quite big enough to do that.

"So you see the Princess is not dead. She has sent her little one up, and now it is being well brought up."

"That's just what I said all along!" said the stork-mother; "and now, think a little, please, of your own family. It will soon be flitting-time. Now and again I have an itching sensation under the wings. The cuckoo and the nightingale have already departed, and I hear the quails saying that we shall soon have a favourable wind. Our young ones will go through the manœuvres all right, I'm quite sure."

But how glad the Viking's wife was when she awoke next morning and found at her breast the pretty little child; she kissed and patted it, but it screamed frightfully, and sprawled about with its arms and legs—it didn't seem happy at all; at last it cried itself asleep, and as it lay there it was one of the prettiest things the eye of man could behold. The Viking's wife was so glad and proud and light of heart, and as she could not get it out of her head that her husband with all his men would certainly come quite as unexpectedly as the little one, she turned the whole house upside down so as to get everything ready in time for them. The long coloured carpets which she herself and her maids had woven with effigies of their gods Odin, Thor, and Freia, as they were called, were hung up; the thralls were set to work scouring the old shields, which were there used as ornaments; skins were laid on the benches and dried fuel was laid on the hearth in the middle of the hall, so that the pile might be kindled at once. The Viking's

wife also laid a hand to the work, so that by evening she was pretty tired and slept well.

Now, when she awoke towards morning, she was not a little terrified, for the little child was clean gone. She sprang up, lit a chip of fir-wood and looked all about, and there, at the bottom of the bed, where she used to stretch her feet, lay, not the little child, but a large ugly toad. The sight of it made her quite sick. She took a big stick and would have beaten the reptile to death ; but it looked at her with such wonderful, melancholy eyes that she could not strike it. Once again she looked round, the toad gave a feeble, pitiful squeak, which made her shrink back, jump out of bed, and rush to the trap-door, which she opened. At that instant the sun came forth and cast his rays right athwart the bed upon the large toad, and all at once it was as though the monster's wide mouth contracted and became small and red, its limbs stretched themselves out in the prettiest way—it was her own little lovely child which lay there, and no ugly toad.

"Why, what is this?" said she ; "have I been dreaming an evil dream? It is indeed my own charming fairy-child which lies there," and she kissed and pressed it to her heart, but it scratched and bit like a wild kitten.

Neither that day, nor yet the next, did the Viking arrive, though he was actually on his way ; but the wind was contrary —it blew southerly for the storks' sake. What is fair wind to one, is foul wind to another.

Two more days and nights made it quite clear to the Viking's wife how matters stood with her little child ; a terrible enchantment rested upon it. By day it was as lovely as a bright elf,

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but had a wild, savage nature; at night, on the other hand, it was a hideous toad, meek and whimpering, with sorrowful eyes. Here were two natures constantly shifting, both outwardly and inwardly. The reason was, that the little girl whom the stork had brought possessed by day its real mother's outward semblance, but at the same time its father's disposition; at night, on the other hand, it was visibly akin to him in bodily shape, whilst its mother's heart and mind shone out of its eyes. Who could loose the spell wrought by such magic art? The Viking's wife had trouble and anguish at the thought, and yet her heart clave to the little creature, as to whose condition she thought she would never have the courage to tell her husband when he came home, for in that case he would certainly, according to law and custom, have exposed the wretched child on the highway to be carried off by the first passer-by. This the worthy Viking's wife had not the heart to do; he should only see the child in the daylight.

At an early hour one morning there was a sound of rushing storks' wings over the roof of the house; during the night more than a hundred pairs of storks had been resting after the grand manœuvres, now they were flying up into the sky to wend their way southwards.

"All men be ready!" was the order; "women and children as well!"

"I feel so light," said each of the young storks; "there's a sort of cribble-crabble right inside my bones as if I were full of living frogs. How delightful it is to set out on one's travels!'

"Keep well with the flock," said the father and mother; "and don't cackle so much, it will spoil your wind!"

And away they flew.

At that very time the alarm sounded all over the heath: the Viking had landed with all his men. They returned home with a rich booty from the Gallic coast, where the people, as in Britain, cried to Heaven in their terror—"Deliver us from the Northmen!"

What a joyful commotion prevailed in the Viking's stronghold at "Wild Moss!" The mead-tub was brought into the hall, the pile was kindled, and the horses were slaughtered; there was to be something like a roast! The sacrificing priest sprinkled the warm horse-blood on the thralls by way of initiation; the fire crackled, the smoke ascended to the roof, the soot dropped down from the beams, but they were used to all that. The guests were invited, and they got good gifts; treachery and evil wiles were forgotten; they drank with each other, and cast the gnawed bones in each other's faces—that was their way of joking. The skjald—a sort of fiddler, but a warrior too, who had been with them all through, and knew what he was singing about—gave them a song in which they heard all about their martial exploits and adventures; every verse had the same refrain: "Power dies, friends die, man himself dies likewise; but a glorious name never dies!" and then they all smote upon their shields, and hammered with their knives or knuckle-bones upon the table, so that it could be heard.

The Viking's wife sat upon the cross bench in the open banqueting hall; she had on a silk kirtle, gold bracelets, and

large amber pearls; she was in her fullest splendour; and the skjald named her also in his song, told of the golden treasure she had brought her rich husband who was right glad about the lovely child—he had only seen it at daytime in all its loveliness. The savagery which went with it pleased him; she might become, he said, a doughty amazon, who would smite down her antagonist; she would not blink her eyes when a practised hand, by way of jest, sliced off her eyebrows with a sharp sword.

The mead-tub was empty, a fresh one was brought up—yes, they drank to the full, they were folks who could carry a full skin. This proverb was then in vogue: "The beast knows when to go home from the pasture, but the foolish man never knows the measure of his own maw." Yes, that they knew, but to know and to do are two different things. This also they knew, that "Dear becomes drear when he sits too long in another man's house." Yet still they stayed—meat and mead are good things; they fared right lustily; and at night the thralls slept in the warm ashes, dipped their fingers in the fat dish-water, and licked them. It was a splendid time!

Once again in the course of the year the Viking went cruising forth. Despite the late autumn storms he departed; he went with his men to Britain's coasts—'twas after all "but across the water," said he—and his wife remained behind with her little girl; and it is a fact that very soon the foster-mother cared more for the poor toad with the gentle eyes and the deep sighs than for the loveliness which bit and scratched.

The raw, wet autumn mist—"Mouthless"—which gnaws off the leaves lay over wood and heath. "Bird Featherless," as they

called the snow, flew along, flake after flake following hard up on each other. Winter was on his way. The sparrows took possession of the storks' nest, and reasoned in their own way about the absent owners. And, indeed, what had become of the stork couple and their young ones? Where were they now?

The storks were now in the land of Egypt, where the sun shone as warmly as it does with us on a lovely summer's day. Tamarinds and acacias were blooming round about; Mohammed's moon poured its white beams on the cupolas of the temples; on the slender towers sat many a pair of storks, and rested after their long journey; whole flocks of them had nest upon nest on the mighty columns and broken arches of the temples and forgotten high places. The date-palm lifted its head aloft, as if it would be a sunshade. The whitish-grey Pyramids stood like silhouettes athwart the clear sky over against the desert, where the ostrich knew it could use its legs; and the lion sat and looked with large wise eyes upon the marble sphinxes which lay half-buried in the sand. The waters of the Nile had returned to their bed; the whole watershed swarmed with frogs, and to the stork family that was the loveliest sight in the land. The young ones fancied it an optical illusion, the whole thing looked so matchless.

"You see what it's like, and it's always like this in our warm land," said the stork-mother, and a thrill of joy went through the young ones' maws.

"Have we still more to see?" said they. "Shall we go farther and farther into this beautiful country?"

"There's nothing more to see," said the stork-mother. "In that luxuriant corner over there, there is only wild wood, where the

trees grow into each other, and are matted together by prickly creeping plants; only the elephants with their clumsy feet can make their way along there; besides, the snakes there are too big for us, and the lizards too quick. But if you go in the direction of the desert, you'll only get the sand in your eyes; and whether its fine or whether its coarse, you are bound to get lost in a sandstorm. No, it is best here. Here are frogs and grasshoppers. Here I stay, and so must you!"

And they did stay. The old ones sat in their nests on the slender minaret, rested themselves, and yet had a busy time of it in smoothing their feathers and polishing their red stockings with their beaks; then they lifted their necks, nodded majestically, and raised their heads, with the high forehead, and the fine, smooth feathers, and the brown eyes which beamed so wisely. The young hen-storks walked gravely among the sappy reeds, stole glances at the other young ones, made acquaintances, and swallowed a frog at every third stride, or toyed with a little snake; it was good sport, they fancied, and tasted nice too. The young cock-storks squabbled among themselves, thwacked each other with their wings, slashed with their beaks, and stabbed each other till the blood came; and so this one was betrothed, and then that one, both young cocks and young hens—that, in fact, was all they lived for. They set to building nests, and so fell a-squabbling again; for in that hot country they all got so very peppery, but it was pleasant for all that, and a great joy to the old ones especially. One always sees something nice in one's own youngsters! Every day, too, there was sunshine here; every day there was lots and lots and lots to eat; one need think of nothing

but enjoying one's self. But inside the rich palace, in the home of their Egyptian host, as they called him, things were anything but comfortable.

The wealthy and mighty ruler lay upon a couch, stiff in all his limbs, stretched out like a mummy, in the midst of the large saloon with the variegated walls; 'twas as though he lay in the midst of a tulip. His kinsmen and henchmen stood round about him, he was not dead, but you could not exactly call him alive either. The saving marsh-flower from the north country, which was to have been sought for and plucked by the one who loved him best, would never be brought. His young and lovely daughter, who had flown over sea and land in a swanskin, high up towards the north, would never come back. "She is dead and gone!" the two home-returning swan-maidens had reported. They had made up between them a whole story about it, and this is what they said: "We all three flew high into the air, when a huntsman saw us, and shot his arrow at us; it struck our young friend, and slowly, singing her farewell song, she sank like a dying swan in the midst of a forest tarn. On its banks we buried her beneath a fragrant weeping-willow. Yet we have taken vengeance; we tied fire under the wings of the swallow that built its nest beneath the huntsman's rushbound roof; it kindled, the house burst into flames, it lit up the whole lake, even to the drooping willow-tree where she is now earth to earth. Never will she come to the land of Egypt."

And then they both wept; and the stork-father, when he heard it, clappered with his beak till it rattled again. "Lies and invention!" said he; "I should like to drive my beak right into their breasts!"

"And break it off, eh?" said the stork-mother; "and a pretty fright you'd look then! Think of yourself first, and then of your family, everything else lies quite outside!"

"Anyhow, I'll perch upon the edge of the open cupola to-morrow when all the scribes and the sages assemble to talk about the sick man; perhaps they will then get a little nearer to the truth."

And the sages and the scribes came together and talked a good deal which the stork could make nothing of; and indeed it all ended in nothing so far as the sick man and his daughter in the wild marsh were concerned; but one may as well hear a little of it, there's so much one ought to hear about, you know.

But first of all it is only right and proper to hear and know what had happened before this, and then we shall be much better acquainted with the whole story, or, at any rate, as well acquainted with it as the stork-father was.

"Love begets life: the highest love begets the highest life—only through love can his life be saved for him," it had been said, and an extraordinarily wise and good saying it was, declared the sages.

"It is a fine idea!" immediately observed the stork-father.

"I don't exactly understand it," said the stork-mother, "and that is not my fault, but the idea's! But it is all one to me, I have other things to think about."

And now the sages talked about love between this and that, and of the difference there was between the love which lovers feel, and the love between parents and children, and the love between the light and the plants when the sunbeams kiss the marsh and the tender blade thereupon sprouts forth—it was so rigmarole and so

learnedly set forth that it was quite impossible for the stork-father to understand, still less to gainsay it; he became quite thoughtful by merely attempting it, half closed his eyes and stood upon one leg the whole of the next day; such learning was too much for him.

But one thing the stork-father did understand; he had heard both the common people and those of high degree declare openly, from the very bottom of their hearts, that it was a great misfortune for many thousands, and for the land as well, that that man should be lying there sick and helpless; 'twould be a joy and a blessing if he could recover his health again. "But where grows the health-giving flower that can cure him?" This was the question they all asked, and they sought for the answer in learned books and in the twinkling stars. They had consulted wind and weather too, and inquired every way, even the most roundabout, and at last, as already said, the scribes and the sages had found an answer: "Love begets life, a father's life!" and there they said more than they themselves understood, and they repeated it, and wrote it out as a recipe, "Love begets life,"—but when it came to apply the recipe practically, why, then they came absolutely to a standstill. At last they all agreed that help must come from the Princess, she who loved her father with all her heart and all her soul. At last they even hit upon how it could be brought about—yes, it was now more than a year and a day since she had gone by night (at the moment when the newly-lit moon had gone down again) to the marble sphinx by the desert, cast away the sand from the threshold of the door, and gone through the long passage which led right into one of the large pyramids, where one of the

mighty kings of the olden time lay in his mummy-case in the midst of all his pomp and splendour ; there she had bent down over the dead man, and then he had revealed to her where she could gain health and deliverance for her father. All this she had done, and in a dream it had been revealed to her that from the deep marsh right away in the country of the Danes (the spot had been most precisely described) she must bring home the lotus flower which should touch her breast in the watery depths, and then her father would be saved.

And for this cause she had flown in swanskin from the land of Egypt right up to the Wild Moss. All this the stork-father and stork-mother knew very well, and now we know it more accurately than we knew it before. We know that the Marsh King dragged her down to him, know that she is dead and gone to all at home ; only the wisest of them all now said, like the stork-mother : " She will take care of herself right enough ! " and for this they resolved to wait, for there was nothing else to be done.

" I think I'll filch the swanskins from those two nasty dirty Princesses ! " said the stork-father, " and then they'll not be able to come to the Wild Moss and make mischief ; as for the swanskins themselves, I'll hide them till I have a use for them."

" Where will you hide them up there ?" asked the stork-mother.

" In our nest by the Wild Moss," said he. " I and our youngest youngsters can help to carry them, and if they are too heavy for us there are places enough on the way to hide them in till our next flight. One swanskin, indeed, would be enough for her, but two are still better ; it is good to have plenty of travelling clothes in a northern land.

" You'll get no thanks for it," said the stork-mother ; " but

you're the master, I suppose—I'm nobody, of course, except at hatching-time."

In the Viking stronghold on the Wild Moss, whither the storks flew towards spring-time, the little girl had now got a name. Helga

they had called her, but that was all too sweet a name to match the savage mood of that peerless beauty. Month by month this mood of hers grew with her growth, and in the course of years, whilst the storks were making the self-same

journeys in autumn towards the Nile, and in spring towards Wild Moss, the little child became a big girl, and before any one had thought much about it, she had grown into the loveliest maiden of sixteen. The shell was lovely indeed, but the kernel hard and rough, she was wilder than the wildest ones of that hard dark time. It was a joy to her to dabble her white hands in the reeking blood of the slaughtered sacrificial horse, in her savagery she bit off the neck of the black cock which the priest was to have slain, and she used to say to her foster-father in real earnest, "If thy enemy came and cast ropes round the beam-heads of the roof, and if it tilted over thy chamber whilst thou slept, I would not wake thee if I could! I would not hear it, so loudly does the blood still buzz about the ear on which thou gav'st me a clout when I was a child! I remember!"

But the Viking believed not these words, for he, like the others, was infatuated by her beauty, nor did he know how little Helga's mood shifted with her skin. She rode without a saddle, as if she had grown on to the horse, when it galloped at full speed, and she did not jump off when it bit and tore at other vicious horses. At a very early age she would throw herself from the cliff with all her clothes on, and swim out against the strong current of the fjord to meet the Viking when his boat came steering landwards. She cut off the longest lock of her lovely long hair and plaited from it a string for her bow.

"Self-made is well made!" said she.

The Viking's wife, after the manner of her time and race, was certainly strong of will and firm of purpose, but compared with her daughter she was but a meek, fearful woman; moreover, she

knew that there was a spell upon the terrible child. Often and often, as if from pure maliciousness, Helga, when her mother was on the balcony, or in the garden, would stand on the very edge of the well, throw about her arms and legs, and then let herself plump down into the deep and narrow hole, where, frog-like, she would bob up and down, and then scramble out again just as if she were a cat, and come into the great hall dripping with water, so that the leaves strewn on the floor turned round and round in the wet stream.

Yet there was one thing which held little Helga in check, and that was the evening twilight; in the twilight she became still and almost pensive, and came and went at the will of others; then a sort of inner sense drew her to her mother, and when the sun sank, and the outward and inward transformation followed, she sat there silent, melancholy, shrivelled up in the shape of a toad—her body, it is true, was now far larger than that beast's body, but for that very reason all the more horrible. She looked like a loathsome dwarf with a toad's head, and webbed skin between her fingers. There was something so piteous in the eyes she saw with. Voice she had none, only a hollow squeak like that of a child which sobs in its dreams; then the Viking's wife would take her on her lap, she forgot the hideous shape, looked only at the sorrowful eyes, and said more than once, "I could almost wish that thou wert my dumb toad-child. Thou art more frightful a sight when the lovely side of thee is turned outwards." And she scrawled the runes against sickness and sorcery, and threw them over the wretched creature's shoulder, but there was no mending it.

"One would scarcely believe that she was once so small that

she could lie in a water-lily," said the stork-father; "now she is quite grown up, and as like her Egyptian mother as one day is like another; the mother we have never seen since. She did not take care of herself as you and the sages supposed. For years and years I have now been flying across and athwart the Wild Moss, but she has never given a sign. Yes, I tell you, in those years when I had arrived up here some days before you that I might mend the nest and put things to rights generally, I have flown about continually the whole night, as if I were an owl or a bat, all over the open water, but it was no good. The two swanskins, also, which I and the young ones dragged all the way up here from the land of Egypt (and heavy enough they were, we had to make three journeys of the job) are as good as useless. They have now lain for many years at the bottom of the nest, and if a fire breaks out, if the log-house is burnt, they will be lost.

"And our good nest would be lost, too!" said the stork-mother. "You think far less of that than you do of your feather-rubbish and your Marsh Princess! Why don't you go down to her to the bottom of the marsh and stay there? You are a bad father to your own, that's what I've always said from the time when I lay upon my first egg. I shouldn't wonder if we or our young ones get an arrow in the wing from that crazy Viking hussey. She doesn't know what she's about half her time. We have been a little longer at home here than she, she ought to think of that. We never forget our duties. We pay our taxes every year, a feather, an egg, and a young one, as is only right. Do you suppose when she is out and about that I dare to go down as I used to do in the old days, or as I do in Egypt, where I am hob-nob with the people,

without presuming upon it, and can poke my beak into every pot and pan? No! here I stick and fret about her ways—the hussey! Yes, and I'm not best pleased with you either. You ought to have let her lie in the water-lily, and then she would have been soon done for."

"Your heart is better than your tongue," said the stork-father. "I know you better than you know yourself."

And then he gave a hop, and then he flapped heavily with his wings twice, stretched out his legs backwards, and flew, or rather sailed, away without moving his wings. When he was a good way off, however, he made a vigorous spurt. The sun shone upon his white feathers, his head and neck were stretched well forward. There was go and style there, if you like. "Why, he's the most handsome of the lot even now!" said the stork-mother; "but I don't *tell* him so."

Early that autumn the Viking came home with booty and captives; amongst the latter was a young Christian priest, one of those men who persecuted the false gods of the Northern lands. Often of late in the hall, and the women's-room, the talk had turned upon the new faith which was spreading far and wide in all lands from the south—nay, which, owing to St. Ansgar, had reached as far northwards as Hedeby.[1] Little Helga herself had heard of the faith in the White Christ, who, of His love for mankind, had given Himself for them; but it had only gone in at one ear and out at the other, as people say. It was only when she was huddled up in the

[1] The modern Sleswig. Ansgar, already Archbishop of Hamburg, built a church at Hedeby, and dedicated it to Our Lady about 840.

hideous toad-shape in the secret chamber that the word love seemed to have any meaning to her; but the Viking's wife had listened to these tidings, and was strangely moved by the tales and rumours concerning the Son of the one true God.

The men who came home from the raid had told about the splendid temples of costly hewn stones raised to Him Whose message was love. A couple of heavy golden vases, artistically wrought and of the purest gold, had been brought home, and about each of them hung a peculiar spice-like fragrance; they were the censers which the Christian priests swung before the altar where blood never flowed, but where the wine and the consecrated bread were changed into His Body and Blood who had given Himself for generations yet unborn.

In the deep stone-paved cellars of the log-house the young Christian priest was placed, with his hands and feet tied with bast bands; beauteous was he, "just like Baldur," as the Viking's wife said, and she was touched by his distress; but Helga eagerly desired that a cord should be passed through his sinews, and that he should be tied to the heels of wild oxen. "Then I would let the hounds loose. Hui! Away over moor and cliff along the the heath! that would indeed be a merry sight, and still merrier it would be to follow him all the way."

But that was not the death the Viking would have him die. He was to be sacrificed on the bloodstone in the sacred grove the next day as a gainsayer and persecutor of the high gods; it would be the first time that a human sacrifice had been offered here.

Young Helga begged that she might sprinkle the people and the images of the gods with his blood. She sharpened her bright

blade, and when one of the large fierce dogs, of which there were enough and to spare about the homestead, dashed over her feet, she plunged the knife right into its side, "to prove it!" as she said, and the Viking's wife looked sorrowfully at the wild evil-minded girl; and when night came, and the mental and bodily beauty of her daughter shifted about again, the sorrow of her heart overflowed, and she spoke to her with warm and anxious words.

The grim toad with the troll's body stood before her, and fastened its brown sorrowful eyes upon her and listened, and seemed to comprehend with a human intelligence.

"Never, not even to my husband, have I suffered my tongue to tell my double sorrow concerning thee," said the Viking's wife; "there is more pity in my heart for thee than I myself fancied. Great is a mother's love, but love has never entered into thy mind. Thy heart is like a cold peat chump. Whence hast thou come into my house?"

Then the pitiable shape trembled strangely, and it was as though the words touched an invisible bond between body and soul, and there were big tears in its eyes.

"Thine evil times will come one day," said the Viking's wife, "and it will be terrible then for me, too. Better far hadst thou been exposed as a child on the highway, and the night chill had lulled thee to death." And the Viking's wife wept many salt tears, and departed, wrathful and sore troubled, behind the loose skin curtain which hung over the beams and divided the room.

Alone in the corner crouched the toad all of a heap; it was speechless, but after a little while a half-stifled sigh escaped it;

'twas as though, in its affliction, a new life had been born in a corner of its heart. At last it took a step forward, listened, and then took another step, and now it fumbled with its helpless hands at the heavy bolt which had been shot forward to hold the door; softly it pushed it back, silently it drew out the pin which had been stuck in over the latch; it grasped the lighted lamp which stood in the ante-chamber as though a will stronger than its own gave it the power; it dragged the iron peg out of the closed trap-door, and crept stealthily down to the captive. He was sleeping; it touched him with its cold clammy hand, and when he awoke and saw the hideous shape, he shuddered as though it was an evil dream. It drew out its knife, cut his bonds in twain, and beckoned to him to follow.

He named the Holy Name, made the sign of the cross, and as the shape still stood unaltered before him, he used the words of the Bible: "'Blessed is he who careth for the poor and needy, the Lord shall deliver him in the day of trouble.' Who art thou? Wherefore hast thou the outward form of a beast, and art yet full of mercy and loving kindness?"

The toad-shape beckoned and led him behind protecting curtains by a lonesome passage to the stables, and pointed to a horse; he sprang upon it, but she also set herself in front, and held on to the beast's mane. The captive understood her, and at a rapid pace they rode along a way which he would never have found by himself out upon the open heath. He forgot her hideous shape; he understood that the grace and compassion of the Lord were working through this hobgoblin, and he prayed pious prayers and sang holy songs. And there she sat and trembled—was it, perhaps, the might

of the prayers and hymns?—or was it a cold shivering fit, a foretaste of the chill morning now nigh at hand? What was going on within her? She raised herself high in the air—she would have stopped the horse and sprang down, but the Christian priest held her fast with all his might, and sang aloud a hymn, as, perchance, being able to break the spell which held her bound in this hideous toad-shape; and the horse dashed still more wildly forward, the sky grew red, the first sunbeam pierced through the clouds, and in that bright flood of light the transformation came to pass. She was once again the young beauty with the demoniacal, evil mood; he held the loveliest young woman in his arms, and, terrified thereat, sprang down from his horse and stopped it, fancying that he had now to deal with yet another mischievous magic spell; but young Helga sprang down from the horse at the same moment, her short child's-shift -scarcely reached down to her knee; she tore her sharp knife from her belt, and rushed upon the astonished priest. "Let me only get at thee!" cried she. "Let me only get at thee, and my knife shall play havoc with thee, thou pale face, thou slave, thou beardless wretch!"

She pressed hard upon him, and a severe struggle began; but it was as though an invisible power strengthened the hands of the Christian man; he held her fast, and the old oak-tree hard by came to his help, for, with its roots half loosened from the earth, it caught her feet as they slipped underneath them. Close by bubbled a spring; he sprinkled her over the face and breast with the fresh stream, bade the unclean spirit come out of her, and signed her after the Christian practice.—More than human might lay in this action wrought against the striving force of evil. It seemed to overpower

her, she let her arms drop down and gazed with wondering looks and blanching cheeks at this man who seemed to her a mighty magician strong in sorcery and the occult art. Surely 'twas dark

runes that he was reciting, mystic signs he was tracing in the air! She would not so much have blinked an eye had he whirled against her the sharp dagger or the glittering axe, but she did so when he made the sign of the cross on her breast and forehead; she sat there

like a tame bird with her head bowed upon her breast. He spoke gently to her of the act of mercy she had done to him that night when she came to him in the hideous toad-skin and loosed his bonds and brought him into life and light; she also was bound, he said, bound in straiter bonds than he, but she also, through him, should come to life and light. He would bring her to Hedeby, to St. Ansgar; there, in the Christian city, the enchantment would be broken. But he dared no longer carry her on the horse in front of him. "Behind must thou sit—not in front of me! Thy magic beauty has power from the evil one. I fear it!" He bowed his knee and prayed devoutly with all his heart. It was as though the hushed solitude of the woods was thereby consecrated and became a holy church; the birds began to sing as if they belonged to the new communion; the wild mints exhaled their fragrance as if they would supply the place of ambergris and incense; and in a loud voice the young priest proclaimed the words of Scripture: "The Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to lighten them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

And he talked about all nature groaning and travailing, and while he spoke the horse which had borne them along in mad career stood still and shook and pulled the large blackberry branches so that the ripe juicy berries fell down upon Helga's hand, thus inviting her to refresh herself.

She let herself quite patiently be lifted on to the horse's back, where she sat like a sleep-walker who wakes not and yet does not walk. The Christian man bound together two branches with a wisp of bast into the form of a cross, and this he held in his hand; and so they rode through the wood, which grew thicker and thicker,

and the road went deeper down till there was no more road at all. The blackthorn bush became a barricade, they had to make a circuit round it; the spring became not a running brook, but a stagnant quagmire, they had to make a circuit round it. Health and refreshment lay in the fresh sylvan air, nor was there less of power in the words of meekness uttered in faith and Christian charity, in the intimate longing to bring back the possessed one to life and light. The raindrop, they say, hollows the hard stone; the waves of the sea, in time, make the rent and jagged rock-stones quite round and smooth; and the dew of grace which stole down upon little Helga hollowed her hardness and rounded off her sharpness. It was to be known indeed by no outward sign, she knew not of it herself: what does the tender shoot that sprouts from the soil in the midst of the quickening moisture and the warm sunshine know of the plant and the flower it conceals within it? Just as the mother's song imperceptibly lays hold of the child's senses, and it babbles forth single words without understanding them, but these same words afterwards collect together into ideas, and in time become clearer and clearer, so in like manner was the operation of the mighty creative word.

They rode out of the wood over the heath, and then again through pathless woods, and towards evening they fell in with robbers.

"Where have you been stealing that pretty baby?" said they, and stopped the horse and tore the two riders from his back, for they were many. The only weapon of the priest was the knife which he had taken from little Helga, and with this he cut and thrust as best he could. One of the robbers swung his axe,

but the young Christian man happily sprang aside, or he would have been struck down; but the edge of the axe went deep into the horse's neck, so that the blood streamed out and the beast fell to the earth. Then little Helga awoke, as it were, from her long fit of pensiveness, and cast herself upon the gasping beast; the Christian priest placed himself in front of her to be her watch and ward; but one of the robbers swung his iron hammer against his forehead and crushed it so that the blood and brains spurted round about—down to the ground he fell dead.

The robbers seized little Helga by her white arm; the same instant the sun went down, the last sunbeam went out, and Helga was changed into a hideous toad: her whitish-green mouth reached half across her face, her arms became thin and slimy, a broad hand with a webbed membrane spread out like a fan. Then the terrified robbers let her go; she stood amongst them like a hideous beast, and, as is the nature of toads, she hopped high into the air, higher than her own stature, and disappeared in the thicket. Then the robbers perceived that it was an evil trick of Loke's, or secret magic, and they hastened from the spot in terror.

The full moon had already risen, soon her light and splendour spread over all, and forth from the brushwood, in the disgusting shape of a toad, crept little Helga. She stopped by the corpse of the Christian priest and by his slain charger, she looked upon them with eyes that seemed to weep; the toad's head gave a squeak like a child about to burst into tears. First she threw herself upon one and then upon the other, took water in her hand, which the

webbed membrane made larger and more hollow, and poured it over them. Dead they were, and dead they would remain; that she understood. Soon the wild beasts would come and eat their bodies. No, it must not be so; therefore she digged in the earth as deeply as she could; she would dig one grave for them both, but all she had to dig with was a strong branch of a tree and her two hands, but they had webbed membrane between the fingers; it split, and the blood came. She then understood that she could not succeed with this sort of work, so she took water and washed the face of the dead man, covered it with fresh green leaves, brought large branches and laid them over him, and shook down leaves in between; then she took the heaviest stones she could lift, laid them over the dead bodies, and stopped up all the crevices with moss; then she believed that the funereal mound was strong and sure enough. But during this heavy work the night was far advanced; the sun burst forth, and little Helga stood there in all her loveliness, with bleeding hands and with tears for the first time on her blushing virginal cheeks. And it was in this transformation that the two natures strove together within her; she shivered and looked around her as if awakened from a frightful dream, rushed towards the slender beech-tree, and in the twinkling of an eye had clambered up to the top of it like a cat, and clung fast to it; she sat there like a scared squirrel, sat the livelong day in the deep sylvan solitude, where all is so still and dead, as people say. Dead, indeed, when a pair of summer birds, billing or bickering, fly by every moment; when close beside the tree are so many ant-hills where hundreds of hard-working little creatures are constantly swarming backwards and forwards; when countless swarms of midges are dancing in the

air; when crowds of buzzing flies, dragon flies, and other tiny winged creatures are darting by; when the earth-worm creeps out of the wet soil, and the moles shoot up their mounds?—yes, if you leave out all this, it is indeed silent and dead in the woods, as dead as people say and think it is! Nobody took any notice of little Helga except the jays who flew shrieking about the top of the tree where she sat, and hopped along the branches towards her with audacious inquisitiveness. A single blink of her eye was sufficient to drive them away again, but they could make nothing of her at all, nor was she any the wiser about herself.

When the evening was nigh, and the sun began to sink, the transformation process summoned her to fresh activity. She let herself glide down the tree, and by the time the last sunbeam had gone out she sat there in the shrunken shape of a toad, with the webbed membrane of her hands all torn and bleeding; but her eyes now shone with a lustre of loveliness which they had scarcely ever possessed in her beauty shape; the meekest, mildest maiden-eyes sparkled from behind the hideous toad-mask, witnesses to deep thought and human feeling. Those beautiful eyes now burst into tears, they wept those heavy tears which give the heart relief.

By the side of the newly raised grave still lay the cross of branches tied together with bands of bast, the last work of him who was now dead and gone. Little Helga took it, and—the thought came of itself—planted it among the stones above him, and the horse that had been slain with him. At this woeful remembrance her tears burst forth afresh, and while in this frame of mind she scratched the same symbol in the ground round about the

grave; it made such a pretty border; and then, whilst with both hands she was thus scratching the sign of the cross, the webbed membrane fell from off her hands like a torn glove, and as she now washed herself in the water of the spring, and looked in wonder at her fine white hands, she again made the sign of the cross in the air between herself and the dead man, and then her lips trembled, her tongue was loosed, and the Name she had heard said and sung so often during her ride through the woods came plainly from her mouth, and she said it: "Jesus Christ!" Then the toad-skin fell to the ground, and she was the young loveliness once more; but her head hung wearily down, her limbs sorely needed repose—she slept.

But her slumber was short; at midnight she was awakened; before her stood the dead horse, so dazzling, so refulgent, light shone from its eyes and from its wounded neck. Close beside it appeared the murdered Christian priest; "more beautiful than Baldur," the Viking's wife would have said; and yet he, too, seemed all aflame.

There was a solemnity in the large mild eyes, a look of righteous judgment so penetrating that it shone right into the inmost recesses of the novice's heart. Little Helga trembled, and her memory was awakened with an intensity such as will be on the Day of Doom. All the good things that had been vouchsafed to her, every kind word that had been said to her, took bodily shape, as it were. She understood now that it was love which had upheld her in those days of trial, in which the elements of spirit and of earth had quickened and striven together; she recognised that she had only obeyed the promptings of varying

moods, and had done nothing of herself; everything had been given to her, and in everything she had been led. Humble, puny, and abashed, she bowed herself before Him who must needs be able to read every corner of the heart, and the same moment she felt, like a lightning-gleam of purifying flame, the glow of the Holy Spirit.

"Thou daughter of the mire," said the Christian priest, "from mire, from earth hast thou come, and from earth shalt thou arise again! The sunbeam within thee shall go back fully conscious to its source, not the beam from the solar body, but the beam from God! I come from the land of the Dead; thou also shalt journey one day through the deep valley into the bright mountain country where Grace and Perfection dwell. I lead thee not to Hedeby for baptism; first thou must burst asunder the water-shield of the deep morass, drag up the living root that has been thy life and thy cradle, and do thy work before consecration can come!"

And he lifted her up on the horse, handed her a golden censer like the one she had seen before in the Viking's stronghold —and, oh, what a sweet and strong fragrance came from it! The gaping wound on the forehead of the murdered man shone like a dazzling diadem; he took the cross up from the grave, lifted it on high, and now away they went through the air, away over the rustling woods, away over the mounds where the buried heroes were sitting on their slain chargers; and the mighty shapes arose, and rode forth to the summit of their mounds. The broad gold circlets with the gold knobs sparkled in the moonlight round their temples, and their capes fluttered in the

breeze. The dragons that brood over hidden treasures lifted their heads and looked after them. The elfin nation peeped forth from the mounds and furrows, they swarmed about with red, blue, and green lights, like sparks in the ashes of smouldering paper.

Away over wood and heath, rivers and rocks, they flew up towards Wild Moss; over it they swept in wide circles. The Christian priest lifted the cross on high, it shone like gold, and from his lips sounded the chant of the Mass. Little Helga sang, too, like the child singing to her mother's song; she swung the censer, and there came from it, as it were, the fragrance from some holy altar, so strong and efficacious that the reeds and rushes of the morass burst into bloom; all the plant germs shot up from the deep bottom, all that had life lifted itself up. A bloom of water-lilies, like an embroidered carpet, extended itself over the waters, and on it lay a sleeping woman, young and lovely. Little Helga thought she saw herself, thought she saw her own reflection in the still water; but it was her mother she saw, the Marsh King's consort, the Princess from the waters of the Nile.

The dead Christian priest commanded that the sleeper should be lifted upon the horse, but it sank beneath the burden as if its body were only a winding-sheet; but the sign of the cross made the aërial phantom strong, and all three rode along towards the solid ground.

Then the cock in the Viking's stronghold crowed, and the phantoms dissolved into a mist which the wind carried away, and now mother and daughter stood face to face.

"It is myself I see in the deep water," said the mother. "It is myself I see in the bright shield," exclaimed the daughter, and they drew nearer to each other till they were breast to breast, bosom to bosom; the mother's heart beat the strongest, and she knew the reason. "My child! my own heart's flower! my lotus from the deep water!" And she embraced her child and wept; her tears were a new life's experience, love's baptism for little Helga.

"I came hither in swanskin, and cast it off," said the mother. "I sank through the swaying weeds deep down into the mire of the morass, which closed in round about me like a wall; but soon I felt a fresher current; a hidden force dragged me down deeper, ever deeper; I felt the pressure of sleep on my eyelids, I slept, I dreamed a dream—it seemed to me as if I lay again in the pyramids of Egypt; but the swaying alder-trunk which had so frightened me on the surface of the water still stood before me. I regarded the refts in the bark, and they shone forth in colours and became hieroglyphics—it was a mummy-case I was looking at; it burst, and forth from it came the millennial potentate, a mummy-shape as black as pitch, gleaming black as the wood-snail, or as fat black mire; whether it was the Marsh King or the mummy of the pyramids, I know not. He wound his arms around me, and it was as though I must die. Something warm upon my breast first brought me back to life again, and I saw that it was a little bird which sat there singing and twittering and flapping its wings. It flew away from my breast right up into the dark heavy ceiling; but a long green ribbon bound it to me still. I heard and understood the tones of

its deep longing: freedom, sunshine, to Father! Then I thought of my own father, my life, my love, in the sunny land of my home, and I loosened the band and let it flutter away—away home to my father. Ever since that hour I have dreamed no more; I slept a sleep so long and heavy till this very hour when strange tones and odours lifted and loosed me."

And that green ribbon reaching from the heart of the mother to the wing of the bird, where was it fluttering now, or whither had it been cast aside? Only the stork had seen it; that ribbon was the green stalk, its bow was that shining flower which had been the cradle of the child who had grown up in loveliness, and now rested once more on its mother's breast. And whilst they stood there in each other's arms, the stork-father flew in circles round them, and then, flying swiftly to his nest, fetched the swanskins which had been hidden there so many years, cast down one upon each of them, and it closed around them, and they rose up into the air as two white swans.

"And now let us talk a bit," said the stork-father. "Now we understand each other's language, although one bird's beak is fashioned differently from another's. What a good job that you have joined us to-night. It could not possibly have fallen out better. To-morrow, mother and I and the youngsters must be off. We are going to fly southwards. Yes, you may well look at me! I am a very old friend of yours from the land of the Nile; and this is mother, her heart is softer than her cackle! She always thought that the Princess would be able to look after herself. 'Twas I and the youngsters who carried the swanskins all the way up here. Well, now! I *am* glad. And what a lucky thing it is

that I am here still. When the day dawns, we shall be off. There'll be lots of stork society. We fly in front, just you keep close behind, and you won't lose your way. Besides, the youngsters and I will keep an eye upon you, too."

"And the lotus flower I was to bring with me," said the Egyptian Princess, "does it not fly in swanskin by my side? I have with me my own heart's flower! Thus it is then that the problem has been solved! Homewards! Homewards!"

But Helga said that she could not quit the Danish land till she had seen her foster-mother, the kind-hearted Viking's wife, once more. Every loving word that her foster-mother had spoken, every tear she had wept, rose up in Helga's thoughts as a sweet remembrance, and at that moment it was as though she almost loved that other mother the best.

"Yes," said the stork-father, "we must go to the Viking's house, mother and the youngsters are waiting for us there, I know. How they will roll their eyes, and let their clappers go! Yes, mother indeed does not *say* much! She is curt and pithy, and means more than she cares to show. I'll spring a rattle, that they may hear us coming." So the stork-father sprang a rattle with his beak, and he and the swans flew towards the Viking's dwelling.

There every one lay in deep slumber. Only late at night had the Viking's wife got any rest. She lay there full of anxiety for her little Helga, who had now disappeared for three whole days with the Christian priest. She must have helped him away, it was her horse which was missing from the stable. What power could

have brought all this about? The Viking's wife thought of the miracles which were said to have been worked by the White Christ, and by those who believed on Him, and followed Him. These shifting thoughts took shape in vivid dreams. It seemed to her as though she still sat awake and thoughtful on her bed, and darkness brooded over all outside. The storm came, she heard the rolling of the sea, east and west, from the North Sea and from the waters of the Cattegat. The monstrous serpent which spans the earth round in the depths of ocean shook convulsively. The night of the gods, Ragnarok as the heathen calls it, was nigh at hand the last time when all things—nay, the high gods themselves—shall perish. The horn of doom resounded, and away over the rainbow bridge rode the gods, clad in steel, to fight the last fight. Before them flew the winged shield-maidens,[1] and the shapes of dead heroes closed up the rearmost ranks. The whole sky around shone as with the radiance of the northern lights, but the darkness was to prevail. That was a tremendous hour.

And close beside the agonised Viking's wife sat little Helga in the hideous toad-shape: she, too, was trembling and crouching up close to her foster-mother, who took her upon her lap and held her fast in loving embrace, despite the hideousness of the toad-skin. The air resounded with the din of swords and battle-axes and hissing darts, as if a raging hailstorm was passing over them. The time had come when earth and heaven must fail, the stars fall, and everything perish in the fire of Surtur; but a new earth and a new heaven were to come, that she knew: the billowy corn would wave where the sea now rolled over the golden sands; the

[1] The Amazons of Northern mythology.

unnamable God was to reign, and Baldur was to rise up and sit beside him—Baldur the mild and gentle, ransomed from the realm of death. And he came; the Viking's wife saw him, she recognised his face: 'twas the captive Christian priest.

"White Christ!" she cried aloud, and as she named that name she impressed a kiss on the hideous toad-child's forehead; then the toad-skin fell off, and little Helga stood before her in all her beauty, with beaming eyes, and gentle as she had never been before: she kissed her foster-mother's hands, blessed her for all the care and tenderness she had shown to her in her days of trouble and trial, thanked her for the thoughts she had planted and awakened within her, thanked her for naming that Name which she herself repeated. "White Christ!" she said, and little Helga arose like a mighty swan, and her ample wings spread out with a rushing sound as when the birds of passage depart in their hosts. The Viking's wife awoke at the sound, and outside the same strong wing-strokes resounded; it was the time, she knew, for the storks to fly away—it was they whom she had heard. She felt she would like to see them once more before their departure, and bid them farewell; so she got up and went out upon the balcony, and then she saw on the ridge of the roof stork upon stork, and round about the court, away over the tall trees, flew flocks and flocks in wide circles; but right in front of her, on the edge of the well, where little Helga had sat so often and scared her with her savage ways, two swans now sat, and looked at her with such wise human eyes; and she remembered her dream, it still possessed her as if it were absolutely a reality.

She thought of little Helga in the swan-shape, she thought of the Christian priest, and all at once she felt strangely happy at heart.

The swans smote with their wings and bowed their necks as if they also would greet her, and the Viking's wife spread out her arms towards them, as if she understood it all, and many were her thoughts as she smiled through her tears.

Then with a noise of strong pinions and a loud cackling, all the storks rose in the air to travel southwards.

"We won't wait for the swans," said the stork-mother; "if they want to come, let them come at once! We can't stick here till the crumb-birds[1] are ready to go! There is something very nice, I think, in travelling all together in families; not like the chaffinches and the ruffs and reeves do, the cocks all flying by themselves, and the hens by themselves—which, to speak plainly, is scarcely becoming. And then, too, what a peculiar flight these swans have!"

"Every one flies his own way," said the stork-father; "the swans go aslant, the cranes triangularly, and the crumb-birds in serpentine lines."

"Don't mention anything about serpents when we are flying up yonder!" said the stork-mother; "it only gives the youngsters longings that cannot be gratified."

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"Are those things down there the lofty mountains I have so often heard about?" asked little Helga, in swanskin.

[1] Birds that feed on crumbs, and therefore presumably inferior to the serpent-eating storks—from the storks' point of view.

"They are the thunderclouds driving along beneath us," said her mother.

"What are those white clouds that raise themselves so high?" asked Helga.

"'Tis the mountains with their everlasting snow that you see," said her mother, and they flew over the Alps down towards the blue-glancing Mediterranean.

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"Africa's land, Egypt's strand!" joyously cried the daughter of the Nile, in her swan-shape, as she viewed from the aërial heights the narrow, whitish-yellow strip which she knew to be her native land. The birds also saw it, and hastened their flight. "I smell the Nile mud and wet frogs," said the stork-mother. "I regularly tingle! Yes, now you shall taste something worth having!—and you shall see Marabu, Ibis, and Traner, they all belong to the family, but are not nearly so handsome as we are; they give themselves airs though, especially Ibis; he has been quite spoiled by the Egyptians, they have made a mummy of him and stuffed him with spices. Personally, I would rather be stuffed with living frogs, and I dare say you think so too, and so you shall be! Better something in one's crop while one lives, than to be all pomp and splendour when one is dead. That is my opinion, and my opinion is always the right one!"

"Now the storks have come!" they said in the rich house by the banks of the Nile, where, in the open hall, on the soft couch, covered with leopard-skin, the royal master lay stretched at full length, not living nor yet dead, hoping for the lotus

flower from the deep Northern marsh. Kinsmen and henchmen stood around him.

And into the hall flew two splendid white swans; they had come with the storks. They cast off their dazzling feather-skins, and there stood two beautiful women, as like unto one another as two drops of dew; they bowed their heads over the pale, withered old man, they flung back their long hair, and while little Helga was bending over her grandfather, his cheeks grew red, his eyes brightened, and life came back to the stiffened limbs. The old man arose hale and young again; daughter and granddaughter held him in their arms as though they but gave him a joyous morning salutation after a long and heavy dream.

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And there was joy in the whole house, and in the swans' nest as well, but there the joy was greatest because of the good food, the swarms and swarms of frogs; and whilst the learned men made haste to note down some reasonable explanations of the story of the Princesses and of the health-giving flower, which was such a great event and blessing, both public and private, the stork-parents told the same tale, their own way, to their families, but not till they were all well filled, for, as a rule, they had something better to do than listen to stories.

"Now you'll become somebody, too," whispered the stork-mother, "or else I'm very much mistaken!"

"What should I become?" said the stork-father: "and what have I done to deserve it? Nothing!"

"You have done more than all the others put together. But for you and the children, the two Princesses would never have seen

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the land of Egypt again and made the old man right. You'll be somebody, I say! You will certainly get a Doctor's degree, and our children will inherit it after us, and their children after them. Why, you look like an Egyptian Doctor already—at least in my eyes."

The scribes and the sages developed the fundamental idea, as they called it, which was at the bottom of the whole event: "Love begets life!" and they explained it in various ways: "The warm sunbeam was the Egyptian Princess; she went down to the Marsh King, and from their union the flower sprang forth——"

"I cannot repeat the words exactly," said the stork-father, who had heard it all from the roof of the house, and was called upon to explain it in the nest; "what they said was so involved. At the same time, it was so very learned that they immediately got promotion and presents; even the head cook got a great mark of distinction—it was for the soup, I should fancy!"

"And what did you get?" asked the stork-mother; "they should not forget the most important one of all; and that is you! The learned men have only cackled a bit all through. Depend upon it, *your* turn will come!"

Late at night, when the repose of slumber rested upon the newly-blessed house, there was one who still lay awake, and it was not the stork-father, although he stood up in the nest on guard on one leg in his sleep—no! it was little Helga who was watching, leaning over the balcony and looking up into the clear sky at the large bright stars; stars so much larger, and of a purer lustre, than those she had seen in the North, and yet the same stars. She thought of the Viking's wife by the Wild Moss; she thought of

her foster-mother's gentle eyes, of the tears she had wept over the poor toad-child, who now stood in the beautiful vernal air, by the waters of the Nile, in pomp and starry splendour. She thought of the love in the heathen woman's breast, the love she had shown to a wretched creature who in human skin was an evil beast, and in beast-skin was loathsome both to sight and touch. She looked at the glittering stars, and called to mind the radiance that streamed from the foreheads of the dead as they flew away over wood and moor; her memory gave back to her, like sweet tones, the words she had heard as they had ridden along, and she had sat like one possessed—words concerning the great origin of love, the highest love which embraces all generations.

Yes, what had not been given, won, attained! Alike by day and by night little Helga's mind pondered over the sum of her good fortune, the sum of her many rare gifts, and she stood in its contemplation like the child who turns impetuously from the giver to the gift; she was merged, as it were, in the overflowing blissfulness which she knew might and would come to her. Veritable miracles had borne her onwards to still higher heights of joy and happiness, and the time came when she so completely lost herself in their contemplation that she thought no longer of the Giver. It was the hardy self-sufficiency of youth, her eyes quite sparkled with it; but she was suddenly awakened from her reverie by a loud uproar in the court-yard beneath her. She saw there two mighty ostriches running rapidly about in narrow circles; never before had she seen this animal, which was so large for a bird, so heavy and clumsy; their wings looked as if they were clipped, the bird itself as if it had been injured, and she asked

what was the matter with it, and so learnt, for the first time, the legend of the ostrich as the Egyptians tell it.

Once the ostrich race was handsome, and its wings large and strong. One evening the mighty fowls of the forest said to it, "Brother, shall we go to-morrow to the river to drink if it be God's will?" And the ostrich answered, "I go because it is *my* will!" At dawn of day they set off, and flew high up towards the sun, which is God's eye; higher and higher they went, and the ostrich a long way in front of all the others; it flew in its pride right towards the light; it trusted in its own strength, not in the Giver of that strength, it did not say, "If God will." Then the chastising angel drew away the veil from the flaming glory of the sun, and in an instant the bird's wings were consumed, and it sank miserably to the earth. The ostrich, therefore, will never be able to rise in the air, but flits about like a scared thing, rushing round and round within a narrow compass; and this is a reminder to us men in all our thoughts and actions to say, "If God will."

And Helga thoughtfully bowed her head, looked at the frantic ostrich, saw its terror, saw its stupid delight at the sight of its own huge shadow on the white walls, and a solemn awe took deep root in her heart and mind. A life so rich, so full to overflowing with happiness had been given—now, what would come of it, what would be the end of it? It would be all for the best, "if God so willed."

In the early spring, when the storks were again about to set off northwards, little Helga took off her golden bracelet, scratched her name upon it, beckoned to the stork-father, put the gold circlet

round his neck, and bade him give it to the Viking's wife. She would then understand that her foster-daughter was alive and happy and had not forgotten her.

"It is a good weight to carry," said the stork-father, when he got it round his neck; "but gold and honour are things which may not be lightly chucked away on the high road, and a stork-messenger brings good luck."

"You deposit gold and I deposit eggs!" said the stork-mother; "but you deposit only once in your life, I do so every year—but nobody appreciates us. It is a great shame."

"But you've the consciousness of a good deed, mother," said the stork-father.

"You can't live upon that," said the stork-mother; "it gives neither a full meal nor a fair wind." So off they flew.

The little nightingale that sang in the tamarind-bush was also going north very shortly; little Helga had frequently heard it up there by the Wild Moss; she wanted to send a message by it, too. She knew the language of birds; from the time when she had flown in swan-skin, she had often spoken with stork and swallow. The nightingale would be sure to understand her; so she bade it fly to the beech-grove in the Jutland peninsula, where the funeral mound of stones and branches had been raised, and she bade it beg all the little birds to keep watch and ward round the grave, and sing a song there over and over again.

And the nightingale flew away—and time flew away likewise.

The eagle stood on the pyramid and saw in the fall of the

year a stately caravan of richly laden camels, with gorgeously arrayed men, well-armed, on snorting Arab horses, shining white as silver, and with red, quivering nostrils, and large and thick mains hanging down around the finely tapering legs. Rich guests were they. A royal prince from the land of Arabia, handsome, as a Prince ought to be, was about to enter that proud house where the stork's nest now stood empty; the dwellers in that nest were now far away in the North country, but they were soon to be back. And they came back on the very day when joy and mirth were at their highest. It was a splendid wedding-feast they were celebrating, and little Helga was the bride, clad in silk and jewels; the bridegroom was the young Prince from the land of Arabia; and they sat at the head of the table, between the mother and the grandfather.

But she looked not upon the bridegroom's swarthy, manly cheek, with its curling black beard; she looked not upon his dark flashing eyes, which were fixed upon her; she gazed forth up towards the twinkling, sparkling star which shone down upon them from the sky.

Then came a rustling sound of strong wings in the air outside —the storks were coming back; and the old stork-couple, tired as they were from their long journey, and much in need of rest, nevertheless flew straight down upon the railings near the verandah. They knew very well what manner of festival it was. Already on the frontier they had heard that little Helga had had them painted on the wall, for they belonged to her story.

"It is very nice of her," said the stork-father.

"It is very little," said the stork-mother; "indeed, it could not very well be less."

And when Helga saw them, she arose and went out on to the verandah to meet them and clap them on the back. The old stork-couple bowed their necks, and the youngsters looked on, and felt themselves honoured. And Helga looked up to the glittering star, which shone more and more clearly, and between it and her moved a shape purer even than that pure air, and therefore visible; it swept quite close to her—it was the dead Christian priest; he, too, had come to her bridal feast from the very kingdom of Heaven.

"The glory and splendour there exceeds everything known on earth!" said he.

And little Helga prayed more earnestly, more feelingly than she had ever prayed before, that she might peep into the Kingdom of Heaven if only for a minute. And he lifted her up into the glory and splendour in a stream of thoughts and tones; it was not only outside her that it shone and sounded, but within her also. Words could not express it.

"Now you must go back—you will be missed!" said he.

"Only one more look!" said she—"only a single short minute!"

"We must back to earth! All the guests are departing."

"Only a look, the last!"

And little Helga again stood upon the verandah; but all the torches outside were extinguished, all the lights in the bride-chamber had gone out; the storks too were gone; not a guest was to be seen; no bridegroom—everything as if blown away in three short minutes.

Then anguish fell upon little Helga, and she went through the large empty halls into the next chamber; foreign soldiers were sleeping there. She opened the side-door which led into her own room, and while she still thought she stood there, she was standing outside in the garden—it was never like this before, the sky had a reddish hue, it was near to dawn.

Only three minutes in heaven, and a whole earthly night had gone!

Then she saw the storks; she called to them, spoke their language, and the stork-father turned his head, listened, and drew near to her.

"You speak our language," said he. "What do you want? Why do you come here, you strange woman?"

"Why, 'tis I!—it is Helga! Don't you know me? Three minutes ago we were talking together over there in the verandah."

"Quite a mistake!" said the stork; "you have dreamt it all!"

"No, no!" said she, and she reminded him of the Viking's fortress, and about the Wild Moss and the journey thither.

Then the stork-father blinked his eyes. "Why, that is an old story. I have heard that it dates back to the time of my great, great grandmother. There was, it is true, such a Princess in Egypt who came from the Danish land, but she vanished on her bridal eve many centuries ago, and never came back again. You can read all about it yourself on the monument in the garden. Don't you see that both swans and storks are carved upon it, and you yourself stand at the top in white marble?"

So it was; little Helga saw it, understood it, and sank down upon her knees.

The sun shone forth ; and just as in former times the frog-skin fell before its rays, and the shape of loveliness became visible, so now, in that baptism of light, a shape of beauty clearer and purer than the sky ascended like a beam of light to the Father.

The body sank down into the dust : there where she had stood lay a withered lotus flower.

"That was quite a new ending to the story," said the stork-father ; "I did not expect that ; but I don't at all dislike it."

"But what will the children say to it, I should like to know ?" asked the stork-mother.

"Yes," replied the stork-father, "that, after all, is the most important thing."

THE SWINEHERD.

THERE was once a poor Prince: he had a kingdom, such a tiny one, but it was big enough to marry upon, anyhow, and to marry he was quite determined. Now, I must say it was pretty bold of him to make up to the Emperor's daughter and say to her right out, "Will you have me?" and yet he did make bold to do so, for his name was known far and wide, and there were hundreds of Princesses who would have been very glad indeed to have said, "Thank you," if they had been asked. But did the Emperor's daughter do so? Well, now, you shall hear.

On the grave of the Prince's father grew a rose-tree—oh, such a lovely rose-tree! It blossomed only once every five years, and then only bore a single flower, but that was a rose which smelt so sweet that by merely smelling it you forgot all your cares and sorrows. The Prince had also a nightingale which could sing as though all the lovely songs in the world were in its little throat. The Princess was to have both the rose and the nightingale, and that is how it came about that they were both put into large silver cases and sent to her.

The Emperor had them borne before him into the large room where the Princess used to walk and play at visitors with her ladies; in fact, they did nothing else; and when she saw the big cases, with the presents in them, she clapped her hands for joy.

"Only fancy if it were a little pussy-cat!" said she. But it turned out to be a beautiful rose.

"Well, now, how nicely it is made!" said all the Court ladies.

"It is more than nice," said the Emperor. "It is genteel."

But the Princess felt the rose, and immediately she was ready to burst into tears.

"Fie! Papa," said she; "why, it is not artificial after all, it is *real!*"

"Fie!" said all the Court ladies; "it is real!"

"Let us first see what is in the other case before we get angry," said the Emperor, and so the nightingale was produced, and it sang so prettily that for the moment it was quite impossible to find any fault with it.

"*Superbe! Charmant!*" said the Court ladies, for the whole lot of them jabbered French; it was hard to say which of them jabbered worse.

"How that bird reminds me of our late Empress's musical-box," said an old courtier. "Ah, yes! 'tis just the same tune, and the same time."

"Yes," said the Emperor; and forthwith he wept like a child.

"But I cannot believe that it is real," said the Princess.

"Yes, 'tis a real bird," said they who brought it.

"Indeed! then let it fly away!" said the Princess, and she would on no account hear of the Prince coming to see her.

But he was not to be rebuffed. He smeared his face all over with black and brown, pressed his cap down over his eyes, and knocked at the door. "Good day, Emperor!" said he. "Couldn't I take service in the palace here?"

"Well, there are so many applicants already," said the Emperor; "but let me see, I very much want some one who can look after swine, for we've lots of them." And so the Prince was appointed the Imperial swineherd. He got a wretched little shed close by the pigsty, and there he had to live; but the whole day long he sat and worked, and by evening he had made a pretty little pot, with bells all round it, and as soon as ever the pot began to boil, the bells tinkled so prettily, and played the old melody—

"Alas! thou darling Augustine!
It is all, all, all over now!"

But the best of it was that when one held one's fingers in the steam that came out of this pot, one could immediately smell what was being cooked in every chimney in the town. Now, that was certainly something very superior to a rose.

And now the Princess came walking along with all her Court ladies, and when she heard the melody she stood stock still, and was so delighted, for she also could play, "Alas! thou darling Augustine!" it was the only tune she knew, but she played it with one finger.

"Yes," she said, "that is the song that I can play. He must indeed be an accomplished swineherd. Go in and ask him what the instrument costs." So one of the maids of honour had to run into the shed, but she put on pattens first.

"What do you want for that pipkin?" asked the maid of honour.

"I want ten kisses from the Princess," said the swineherd.

"Heaven preserve us!" said the maid of honour.

"Yes, I cannot take less," said the swineherd.

"Well, what does he say?" asked the Princess.

"I really cannot tell you," said the maid of honour, "it is too frightful!"

"Then whisper it." So she whispered.

"He is very naughty, really!" said the Princess, and turned away at once; but when she had gone a little distance the bells tinkled again so prettily:—

"Ach, du lieber Augustin,
Alles ist væk, væk, væk!"

"Listen now!" said the Princess, "ask him if he will take ten kisses from one of my Court ladies."

"No, thank you!" said the swineherd; "ten kisses from the Princess, please, or I shall keep the pipkin!"

"How very tiresome, to be sure!" said the Princess. "Well, then, stand all of you in front of me, so that nobody may see it!"

And the Court ladies all ranged themselves in front of her and spread out their dresses; and so the swineherd got the ten kisses, and the Princess got the pipkin.

And now they had indeed a merry time of it. All that evening, and the whole of the next day, the pipkin was kept a-boiling. There was not a chimney in the whole town but they knew what was being cooked there, whether it was the Lord

Chamberlain's or the cobbler's. The Court ladies danced and clapped their hands.

"We know who is going to have sweet soup and pancakes for dinner, and who is going to have chops and hasty-pudding. How interesting that is!"

"Most highly interesting!" said the Lady Stewardess of the Household.

"Yes; but hold your tongues about it, for I am the Emperor's daughter!"

"Of course, of course!" said they all.

The swineherd, that is to say, the Prince—but *they* didn't know but what he was a real swineherd—let not a day pass by without making something or other; and at last he made a rattle, and when one sprang this rattle, one heard all the waltzes, jigs, and polkas that ever were known from the creation of the world.

"Why, that is *superb!*" said the Princess, as she passed by, "I have never heard such a beautiful composition! Listen now! Just go in and ask him what the instrument costs. But mind, I'll give no kisses!"

"He wants a hundred kisses from the Princess!" said the maid of honour who had been in to ask.

"I think he is mad!" said the Princess, and she went on her way, but when she had gone a little distance she stood stock still. "After all, one should encourage art," said she. "I am the Emperor's daughter. Tell him he shall have ten kisses, just like yesterday, the rest he must take from my Court ladies."

"But we don't like to," said the Court ladies.

"Fiddlesticks!" said the Princess. "If I may kiss him, you may too. Remember, I give you board and wages!" so the maid of honour had to go to him again.

"A hundred kisses from the Princess," said he, "or every one keeps his own!"

"Stand in front!" said the Princess, and so all the Court ladies stood in front, and he up and kissed her.

"Why, what's the meaning of all that commotion by the pigsty yonder?" said the Emperor, who had stepped out upon the balcony; and he rubbed his eyes, and put on his glasses. "Why, if it isn't the Court ladies! They are playing some sort of game. I must go down to them." So he put on his slippers, and pulled them up behind, for they were shoes he had worn down at heel.

By George! what a hurry he was in.

As soon as he came down into the courtyard, he went very softly, and the Court ladies had so much to do with counting the kisses, so that it might be a perfectly fair bargain, and the swineherd might not get too many or too few, that they absolutely never observed the Emperor. He raised himself on tip-toe "Why, what's this?" said he, when he saw them kissing, and with that he beat them about the head with his slipper just as the swineherd had got his six-and-eightieth kiss. "Be off with you!" said the Emperor, for he was wrath, and both the Princess and the swineherd were expelled from his domains.

There she stood now a-weeping; the swineherd cursed and the rain poured down in torrents.

"Alas! wretched creature that I am!" said the Princess; "if only I had taken that nice prince! Alas! how miserable I am!"

And then the swineherd went behind a tree, wiped all the black and brown from his face, pitched away his nasty clothes, and stepped forward in his princely raiment, and so handsome he looked that the Princess could not but curtsey.

"I have come to scorn you, you creature, you!" said he. "You wouldn't have an honest Prince! You could not appreciate roses and nightingales, but you could kiss the swineherd for a trumpery toy! Take it, then, and much good may it do you!"

And so he returned to his realm, shut the door behind him, and barred and bolted it, and she had now full leisure to stand outside and sing:—

"Ach, du lieber Augustin,
Alles ist væk, væk, væk!"

"SHE'S GOOD FOR NOTHING"[1]

THE Mayor stood by the open window; he was in his shirt sleeves with a breast-pin in his shirt-frills and extraordinarily well-shaved, his own handiwork; yet he had managed to give himself a little cut and had pasted a bit of newspaper on the top of it.

"I say, little one! Dy'e hear?" cried he.

The little one was none other than the washerwoman's son who was passing by just then and respectfully took off his cap; it had a broken peak, and was made to be put into the pocket. In his poor but clean and particularly well patched-up clothes, and with his heavy wooden shoes, the boy stood there as respectfully as if he stood before the King himself.

"You are a good boy," said the Mayor, "you are a boy with manners! Your mother is rinsing clothes down by the brook, isn't she? And you're going down there, I suppose, with what

[1] Andersen says that he picked the kernel of this story out of some words he heard his mother speak when he was quite a little boy. The poor washerwoman was a real character in Andersen's native town, and Andersen's large-hearted mother knew and befriended her.

you've got in your pocket. That's a bad habit of your mother's! How much have you there?"

"Half-a-pint!" said the boy in a frightened, half-whispering voice.

"And didn't she have the same this morning?" persisted the man.

"No, it was yesterday," replied the boy.

"Two half-pints make a whole pint! She's no good! 'Tis a sad business with this class of people! Tell your mother she ought to be ashamed of herself, and never you be a tippler. But you're bound to be, I know! Poor child! And now go!"

And the boy went. He still held his cap in his hand and the wind blew upon his yellow hair so that it rose in long tufts. He went along the street, into the lane and down to the river where his mother was standing out in the water close by the washing-stool hammering away at the heavy linen with her beetle. There was a current in the water, for the sluices of the water-mill were up, and the sheet drove before the stream and was very nearly wrenching the washing-stool along with it; the washerwoman had to tug against it with all her might.

"I am very near sailing away," said she. "'Tis a good job you've come. I shall be none the worse for a little cordial to keep my strength up. It is cold in the water out here, and I've been standing in it these six hours. Have you anything for me?"

The lad brought out the bottle, and the mother put it to her mouth and took a good pull at it.

"Oh! what a lot of good it does one, how it warms! It is just as good as hot meat and not half so dear! Drink, my lad! You

look so pale, you are freezing in those thin clothes, and it is autumn, remember. Ugh! How cold the water is! I only hope I sha'n't get ill! But I won't do that! Just give me another thimbleful. And you drink too, but only a little drop; you must not make a habit of it, my poor wretched child!"

And she went round by the bridge where the boy stood and stepped on to the dry land. The water dripped from the rush-mat she had round her waist; the water flowed from her petticoats.

"I toil and moil till the blood is ready to burst out of the roots of my nails, but it's all the same to me if only I can get you on, my dear child!"

The same moment up came a somewhat older woman, shabby and careworn, lame of one leg, and with a tremendously big false curl over one eye. This curl was meant to hide her eye, but it made the squint all the plainer. It was a friend of the washerwoman: "Lame Molly with the curl," her neighbours called her.

"Poor thing, how you slave and slave, and stand in the cold water! I don't wonder at your wanting something to warm you up a bit, and yet people take offence at the wee drops you take." And now the whole of the Mayor's speech to the boy was very soon told to the washerwoman, for Molly had heard the whole thing and it had vexed her that he should have talked so to the child about its own mother and the drops she took when he himself was about to sit down to his big midday banquet with whole rows of wine-bottles: "Fine wine and strong wine for me! A fellow needn't be particular about a glass or two, but one doesn't call that drinking! We fellows are all right, it is only you, you old washerwoman, who are no good!"

"So he has been talking to you, my child!" said the washerwoman, and her lips trembled. "You have a mother who is no good; perhaps he is right! But he shouldn't say that to my child. Yet from that house, many an evil has come upon me!"

"Yes, indeed, you were in service in that house when the Mayor's parents lived and dwelt there years ago! Many a half-bushel of salt has been consumed there since then, so that I am not surprised at a body 'getting thirsty,'" and Molly laughed. "There is a great banquet to-day at the Mayor's. It ought to have been put off, but it is too late now, and the meat has all been got ready. I had it from the outdoor servants. An hour ago there came a letter to say that his younger brother has died in Copenhagen."

"Died!" cried the washerwoman, and she grew pale as death.

"Eh! my word!" cried the old woman, "do you take it so much to heart then as all that? Well, I suppose you knew him from the time when you were in service there?"

"Is he dead? He was the best, the dearest of men! God does not get many like him!" and the tears ran down her cheeks. "Oh Heavens! I feel as if I were going round and round! 'Tis all because I drank out of that bottle! It was more than I could stand! I feel so bad!" and she leaned heavily against the palings.

"Why, bless me, mother, you're quite bad," said the old woman. "Never mind, it will pass away. Nay, but you are really ill. The best thing you can do is to go home."

"But the clothes there!"

"Oh, I'll see after them! Take hold of my arm. The lad

can remain here and take care of them till I come back and wash the rest of 'em; there's only a little bit left to do."

The washerwoman's feet regularly tottered beneath her.

"I've been standing here too long in the cold water. I have had neither sop nor sup since morning. I've fever in all my limbs. Oh, Lord! help me home! Oh, my poor child"—and she wept.

The boy wept also, and soon he was sitting alone by the wet clothes.

The two women went away slowly, the washerwoman tottering along the lane, along the street, past the Mayor's house and just in front of it she sank down on the pavement. A crowd collected.

Lame Molly ran into the house for help, and the Mayor and his guests looked out of the window.

"'Tis the washerwoman," said he, "she has had a little too much; she's no good; 'tis a pity for that nice little boy of hers. I've a real liking for that child. The mother's no good!"

And she was brought to again and taken to her poor home where she was put to bed. A bowl of warm ale with butter and sugar in it was straightway prepared by worthy Molly (it was the best possible medicine in her opinion), and then she went on to the rinsing-place, rinsed very badly indeed although with the best intentions, dragged the clothes ashore, wet as they were, and stuffed them into a box.

In the evening she sat in the poor room with the washerwoman. A couple of baked potatoes and a piece of ham she had got from the mayor's kitchen-maid for the sick woman, and the lad and Molly enjoyed it finely; the sick woman was satisfied with the smell of it —it was so nourishing, she said.

And the boy went to bed, the self-same bed in which his mother lay, but his place was crossways by her feet, with an old piece of carpet over him, sewn together from blue and red scraps. And the washerwoman felt a little better; the warm ale had strengthened her, and the smell of the nice meat had done her good.

"Thanks, you good soul," she said to Molly, "and I'll tell you everything about myself when the lad's asleep. I think he's off already. How sweet the darling looks with his eyes closed! He little knows what's the matter with his mother. May God spare him what I have gone through! I used to be in service at the Privy Councillor's, the Mayor's father, and it happened then that the youngest of his sons came home; he was a student. I was a young madcap in those days, but I was an honest girl too, God is my witness to it," said the washerwoman. "The student was so merry and gay, such a nice fellow! every drop of blood in him was honest and good. A better man has never existed on this earth. He was my master's son, and I was only a serving maid, but lovers we became in all honour and virtue, and a kiss is surely no great sin when folks are fond of one another. And he told his mother all about it; she was as a god to him here below, and she was wise, tender, and loving. He went away to foreign parts, and he placed his gold ring upon my finger. When he had gone right away, my mistress sent for me; solemnly she stood there, and yet she was so gentle too, and she talked to me as God Himself might have talked; she made clear to me, in spirit and in truth, the distance between him and me. 'He has only eyes, just now, for your good looks,' said she, 'but good looks won't last for ever. You have not been brought up like him. Mentally you will never be fit companions for

each other, the more's the pity! I respect the poor man,' said she, 'and no doubt God will give him a much higher place than many who are rich; but here on earth one should never cross a bad rut when one is driving, or one will get a spill, and that is what will happen to you too! I know that a worthy man, an artisan, has been wooing you, glove-maker Erik, I mean; he is a widower, has no children, and is well-to-do. Think the matter over.' Every word she said was like a knife through my heart; but the woman was right, and it wrung and weighed down my heart. I kissed her hand and shed bitter tears, and I wept still more when I got into my room and laid me down upon my bed. It was a weary night that followed. God only knows what I went through. So on Sunday I went to the Lord's Table to be enlightened. Then—it was like an ordination of Providence—just as I was coming out of the church who should I meet but Erik, the glove-maker. So there was no longer any doubt in my mind; our positions and circumstances made us suitable for each other; nay, he was even a well-to-do man. So I went straight up to him, took his hand and said to him: 'Are thy thoughts still toward me?' 'Yes, for ever and ever,' said he. 'Dost thou want a girl who honours and respects, but does not love thee, though that may come afterwards?' 'Oh, that will come!' said he, and so we gave each other our hands. I went home to my mistress. The gold ring which her son had given me I wore upon my naked breast. I couldn't put it on my finger in the day-time, but only in the evening when I laid me down to sleep. I kissed the ring till my mouth bled and then I gave it to my mistress, and said that next week the banns would be put up in church for me and the glove-maker. Then my

mistress took me in her arms and kissed me—she didn't say I was no good, but *then* perhaps I was better than I had ever been before, though I had not yet experienced so much of the world's adversity. And so the marriage took place at Candlemas, and the first year was a good year, we had man and maid, and you, Molly, were in our service."

"And a dear, kind mistress you were," said Molly. "I shall never forget how gentle you and your husband were to me."

"You were with us in our lucky years. We had no children then. I never saw the student; or rather, I saw him, but he didn't see me. He came hither to his mother's burial. I saw him standing by the grave; he was as white as chalk and so sad, but that was for his mother's sake. When, later on, his father died too, he was away in foreign parts, and didn't come here nor has ever been here since. He never married, so far as I know; he was a proctor, I believe; but anyhow he remembered me no more, and if he had seen me, he certainly would not have known me again, I had grown so ugly. And it is just as well!"

And she talked about her weary days of trial, and how misfortune literally overwhelmed them. They owned 500 rixdalers, and as there was a house in their street to be got for 200, and it would pay them very well to have it pulled down and a new one built in its stead, the house was bought. The masons and carpenters estimated that the cost of rebuilding would be 1020 more. Erik the Glover had credit, he borrowed the money from Copenhagen; but the skipper who should have brought it to him was shipwrecked, and the money went down with him.

"It was then that I gave birth to my darling boy who lies sleeping

there now. His father fell into a grievous, lingering sickness; for three-fourths of a year I had to dress him and undress him. We went from bad to worse, steadily downwards; we borrowed and borrowed; we parted with all our goods, and then father died. I have toiled and moiled, struggled and striven for the child's sake; scrubbed steps, washed clothes, coarse and fine; but 'tis God's[1] will that I shall not be any better off, yet he will open up a door of deliverance for me and care for the child."

Then she fell asleep.

In the morning she felt much refreshed, and strong enough, as she thought, to go to her work again. She had scarcely come out of the cold water, however, when a tremor, a faintness came over her; she groped spasmodically in front of her with her hands, took a step forwards, and fell down. Her head lay upon the dry ground, but her feet out in the stream, her wooden shoes which she had stood in on the bed of the river—there was a wisp of straw in each of them —drifted down the stream; in this state she was found by Molly, who came with the coffee.

A message had come from the Mayor that she was to wait upon him immediately, he had something to communicate to her. It was too late. A barber was sent for to cup her, but the washerwoman was dead.

"She has drunk herself to death!" said the Mayor.

In the letter which brought the news of his brother's death the contents of his will was given, and there was a clause therein bequeathing 600 rixdalers to the glove-maker's widow who had

[1] Vor Herre. *Lit.:* Our Lord, a familiar Danish expression, somewhat similar to the French *le bon Dieu.*

once been in the service of his parents. The money was to be given to her and her child in smaller or great portions as might be thought best.

"There was some sort of nonsense between my brother and her," said the Mayor; "'tis a very good thing she is out of the way; the lad will now get the whole lot, and I'll put him with honest folk; a good artisan may be made of him." And God blessed these words.

And the Mayor sent for the boy, promised to look after him, and told him what a good thing it was that his mother was dead, for she was no good.

They carried her to the churchyard, the pauper's churchyard. Molly planted a little rose tree on the grave, and the lad stood by the side of it.

"My darling mother!" said he, and the tears streamed down his cheeks; "is it true that she was no good?"

"Nay, she was of some good," said the old serving-woman, and looked up to Heaven. "I know it from what I have seen of her these many years, from what I saw last night. I tell you she *was* of some good, and God in Heaven says so too; let the world say 'She was no good' as long as it likes!"

THE STORY OF THE YEAR.

It was late in January. The snow-storm was frightful. The snow flew in whirling flakes through streets and lanes. The window-panes were regularly plastered with snow, from the roof-tops it plunged down in masses. And then there was such a rush of people, they flew and fell into each other's arms and held one another fast for a moment to keep their footing. Carts and horses were regularly powdered over, the lacqueys stood with their backs against the carriage and drove backwards against the wind, foot-passengers kept steadily in the shelter of the vehicles, which could only go very slowly along in the deep snow, and when the storm at last subsided and a narrow path was made along the houses, people stood still there when they met each other in the middle of it. Neither cared to take the first step aside into the deep snow to let the other hop past. There they stood like dummies, till at last, as if by a tacit understanding, each one sacrificed a leg and let *that* plunge into the snow heap.

Towards evening it was a dead calm. The sky looked just as if it had been swept out and made higher and more transparent.

The stars all seemed brand new, and some of them were so bright and blue. And it froze till it regularly crackled. The uppermost layer of snow grew so hard that by the morning it easily bore the weight of the grey sparrows who hopped up and down wherever it had been shovelled, but there was not much food to be picked up and they were regularly freezing.

"Piep!" said one to the other, "they call this the New Year; but I'm sure it's much worse than the old one, so we might just as well have stuck to that. I am discontented, and I have cause to be."

"Yes, and there are those men all scurrying about and drinking the New Year in," said a little half-frozen sparrow; "they are breaking pots against the doors and are off their heads with joy that the old year has gone; and I also was glad at it, for I expected we should get warmer weather; but nothing of the sort! It freezes harder than ever. Men have miscalculated the times and seasons."

"That they have," said a third, who was old and had a white top knot; "they have now something they call the almanack, an invention of their own of course, and everything is to go by that; but it doesn't. When Spring comes, that's when the year begins. 'Tis Nature's course and I go by that."

"But when *does* Spring come?" asked the others.

"It comes when the stork comes, but there's always a good deal of uncertainty about him, and in the town here there's nobody who knows anything about it; they know much better out in the country. Shall we fly thither and wait? One is nearer to Spring there."

"Yes, a very good idea," said one of them who had been

hopping and pieping about for some time without really saying anything in particular, "but I have a good many conveniences in the town here which I am afraid I should miss outside. In the house round the corner here there is a family of human beings which has hit upon the very sensible idea of nailing fast to the wall three or four flower pots with a great opening inside, and the bottoms turned outwards, and in it they have carved a hole so big that I can fly out and in. There I and my husband have our nest, and from thence all our young ones have flown out into the world. This human family has naturally invented the whole thing for the sake of looking at us, or else they wouldn't have done it. They strew bread crumbs also for their own amusement, and so we have food. It is just as if we were taken care of, so I think my husband and I will remain, though we are very discontented—but, still, we'll remain."

"And we'll fly away into the country to see if the Spring is coming." So off they flew.

And it was something *like* winter out in the country. It was freezing a couple of degrees harder than in town. The keen wind blew right over the snow-covered plain. The farmer, with big mittens on, sat on his sledge and thumped his body well with his arms to keep the cold out of them. His whip lay in his lap, his lean horses galloped till they steamed, the snow crackled, and the sparrows hopped in the ruts and were nearly frozen.

"Piep! when's Spring coming? It is so long, so long!"

"So long!" It sounded right over the fields from the highest bank all covered with snow. It might have been an echo that was heard, but it could just as well have been the words of a strange

old man who was sitting right at the top of the highest snowdrift, all exposed to wind and weather. He was quite white, just like a farmer in his frieze mantle, with long white hair, a white beard, quite pale was he too, and had large bright eyes.

"Who's that old man yonder?" asked the sparrows.

"I can tell you that," said an old raven who was sitting on the railings and was condescending enough to recognise that we are all little birds in God's eyes, and therefore stooped even to the sparrows and gave them explanations. "I know who that old fellow is. It is Winter, the old man from last year; he is not dead as the almanack says, not a bit of it; he is in fact the guardian of little Prince Spring who is coming. Yes, I say, Winter rules now. Ugh! don't your bones crack with cold, my little men?"

"Now isn't that just what I said?" said the smallest sparrow, "the almanack is merely a human invention, it does not take Nature as its model; they should leave it to us who are more finely made."

And a week passed by, and then another. The woods were black, the frozen lake lay so heavy and looked like molten lead. The clouds—nay, don't call them clouds—wet, ice-cold mists hung over the country. The big black crows flew all together in flocks without croaking; it was just as if everything were asleep. Then a sunbeam glided over the lake and it shone like molten tin. The snowy winding-sheet that lay over the fields and on the banks no longer glistened as before, but the white figure, Winter himself, still sat there looking steadily towards the south. He did not observe at all that the snowy carpet was sinking into

the earth, as it were, and here and there a little grass-green spot was visible, which regularly swarmed with sparrows.

"Quee-veet! Quee-veet! Is Spring coming now?"

"Spring!"—It sounded over meadow and field and through the dark brown woods, where the moss shone so freshly green on the trunks of the trees, and through the air came flying from the south the first two storks; on the back of each sat a pretty little child, a boy and a girl, and they kissed the earth by way of greeting, and wherever they set their feet white flowers grew up from beneath the snow. Hand in hand they went up to the old ice-man Winter, lay upon his breast by way of fresh greeting, and the same instant all three of them and the landscape as well were hidden from view; a thick, wet mist—oh, it was so dense and heavy!—enfolded everything. Gradually it lifted—the wind came rushing along, it came in strong gusts and chased the mist away. The sun shone so warm. Winter had vanished. Spring's lovely children sat upon the throne of the year.

"That's what *I* call the New Year!" said the sparrows. "Now we shall get our rights again and compensation for the severe winter."

Wherever the two children turned, there the green buds shot forth on trees and bushes, there the grass grew higher and the young corn a more vivid green. And all round about her the little girl cast flowers; she had an abundance of them in her lap, they seemed to swarm forth from it, it was always full of them however lavish she was with her casting forth—as quick as light she scattered a whole snow-storm of flowers over the apple and

peach trees, so that they stood there in all their splendour before they had had time to put on green leaves.

And she clapped her hands and the boy clapped his hands too, and then out came the birds, one could not tell from whence, and they all twittered and sang: "Spring has come!"

It was a lovely sight, and many a little old grandmother came to the threshold of her door in the sunshine, shook herself, looked right away over the fields where the yellow flowers stood in all their glory, just as they had been in her young days. The world had grown young again. "How delightful it is to-day!" said she.

And the woods were still of a brownish green, bud lay by bud, but the woodruff was out, so fresh and so fragrant, the violets stood in full bloom, and there were anemones, cowslips, and oxlips; nay, in every blade of grass there was sap and vigour, there was a regularly splendid flower-carpet to sit down upon, and there sat the young Spring couple and held each other by the hand, and sang and smiled and grew bigger and bigger.

A gentle rain fell from heaven upon them; they perceived it not, the raindrop and the joyful tear were one and the same drop. Bride and bridegroom kissed each other, and in an instant the woods sprang into life. When the sun rose up all the forest was green.

And hand in hand, the bridal pair walked beneath the fresh hanging leafy roof, where only the sunbeams and the shadows gave change of colour to the ever-shifting green. A virginal purity and a refreshing fragrance was in the delicate leaves. The bright and living waters of brook and stream rippled among

the velvet green rushes and over the variegated pebbles. "Full to overflowing for ever and aye it is and ever will be!" said all Nature; the cuckoo sang and the lark piped, it was beautiful Spring; but the willow trees had woollen mittens round their flowers, they were so frightfully careful, and that's always so tiresome.

And so the days passed away and the weeks too, the heat regularly rolled down; hot air waves passed through the corn, which became more and more golden. The white lotus of the north spread its large green leaves over the watery mirrors of the forest lakes and the fish sought a shelter beneath them; and on the lee side of the wood, where the sun burned down upon the walls of the farm-house and regularly heated the full-blown roses through and through, and the cherry trees hung full of juicy black, almost sun-burnt berries, sat Summer's lovely lady, she whom we saw as a bairn and as a bride; and she looked towards the dark ascending clouds which like heavy dark blue billows, mountain-high, lifted themselves higher and higher. From three sides they came, and growing every moment like an ocean upside down and turned to stone, they descended upon the woods, where everything lay still and dumb as if beneath a spell; every breath of air had died away, every bird was still, all Nature was awesome and expectant; but along the roads and paths all sorts of passengers, walking, riding, and driving, were trying to get under cover. Then, suddenly, there was a radiance, as if the sun were breaking forth, a radiance dazzling, blinding, all enkindling, and then all was gloom again amidst a rolling crash. The water poured down in streams; there was night and there

was light, there was stillness and there was uproar. The young brown-feathered rushes in the fens swayed to and fro in long billows, the branches of the trees were hid in watery veils, darkness came and then light, stillness and then uproar. The grass and corn lay as if they had been beaten down and scattered about, they looked as if they could never lift their heads again.

Suddenly the rain became single drops, the sun shone, and on blade and leaf the water-drops sparkled like pearls, the birds sang, the fishes plashed in the brook, the midges danced, and out upon a stone in the salt whipped-up sea water sat Summer himself, a stalwart man with lusty limbs and dripping wet hair—renewed by his fresh bath, he was sitting there in the warm sunshine. All Nature round about was renewed, everything stood there full of vigour, life and beauty; it was summer, warm, lovely summer.

Sweet and fresh was the fragrance which came from the luxuriant clover fields, the bees hummed there round old Thingsted; the bramble shoots wound round the altar-stone which, washed by the rain, shone in the sunlight, and from thither the queen-bee flew with her swarm and laid down her store of wax and honey. Nobody saw it but Summer and his lusty wife; for them the altar-board stood covered with Nature's offerings.

And the evening sky shone like a golden cupola—no church has a cupola half so rich—and the moon shone between red sunset and red sunrise. It was Summer-time.

Days passed by and weeks also. The bright scythes of the reapers twinkled in the cornfields; the branches of the apple

trees bent down beneath their red and yellow fruit; the hop gave forth its sweet fragrance and hung down in large knobs, and beneath the hazel bushes, where the nuts sat close together in heavy clusters, abode man and wife, Summer and his majestic lady.

"What wealth!" said she; "blessings all round about, good and homely, and yet I know not how it is, but I yearn after—rest—peace! I know not the proper word for it. They are ploughing up the fields all over again already, men will always have more and more! Look, the storks go about in flocks and follow behind the plough, the birds of Egypt which bore us through the air. Don't you recollect when we both came to the north as children? We brought the flowers, the lovely sunshine, and the green woods; the wind has played havoc with them all now, they are growing brown and dark like the trees of the south, but bear no golden fruit like they do."

"Them wouldst thou see?" said Summer, "then gladden thy heart!" and he raised his arm and the leaves of the forest were dyed with red and with gold, a glow of colour came upon all the woods; the rose bushes shone with fiery red hips, the elder branches hung down with heavy, dark brown berries, the wild chestnuts fell ripe out of their dark green shells, and within the woods the violets bloomed for the second time.

But the Queen of the Year grew more and more pale and silent. "The air strikes cold," said she, "the night has wet mists! I long after the land of my childhood."

And she saw the storks fly away, every one of them, and she stretched her hands after them. She looked up at the nests

which stood there empty, and in one of them there grew up the long stalked cornflower and in another the yellow charlock, as if the nest were only meant as a shelter and a defence for them, and the sparrows perched upon it.

"Piep! What have become of the master and mistress? I suppose they cannot bear the blast to blow upon them, and so they have left the country; a pleasant journey to them!"

And more and more yellow grew the leaves of the forest and leaf after leaf fell, the autumn storms raged, it was late in autumn time. And on the yellow leaf-fall lay the Queen of the Year and looked with gentle eyes at the twinkling stars, and her husband stood beside her. A gust of wind whirled among the leaves—there was another fall of leaves and then she was gone, but a butterfly, the last of the year, flew through the cold air.

And the wet mists came, the icy blast and the long dark nights. The Regent of the Year stood there with snow-white hair, but he knew it not; he thought it was the snowflakes falling from the clouds; a thin coating of snow lay over the green fields and the church bells rang out for Christmas.

"The Birth Bells are ringing," said the Regent of the Year, "the new ruling couple will soon be born; and I shall get rest like her, rest in the twinkling stars."

And in the fresh green pine forest, where the snow lay, stood the Yule-tide angel and consecrated the young trees which should serve for his festival.

"Joy in the house and under the green branches!" said the

Regent of the Year; weeks had aged him into quite an old fellow. "The hour of my repose is at hand, the year's young couple will now get crown and sceptre!"

"And yet the power is thine," said the Yule-tide angel; "power and not rest! Let the snow lie over the young seed and warm it! Learn to bear to see homage rendered to another whilst thou dost still hold sway, learn to be forgotten and yet to live, the hour of thy liberation will come with Spring!"

"When *does* Spring come?" asked Winter.

"It comes when the stork comes."

And with white locks and snow-white beard Winter sat there icy cold, old and bowed down, but strong as the winter's storm and the ice's might, he sat on the lofty snow-drift and looked towards the south as the Winter had sat and looked the year before. The ice cracked, the snow crackled, the skaters swung round and round the smooth, bright lake, and the ravens and the crows looked quite nice on the white ground, not a breath of air was stirring. And Winter folded his hands in the still air, and the ice between the islands grew fathoms thick.

Then the sparrows again came from town and asked: "Who is that old man yonder?" And the raven (or a son who was just like him) sat there again and said: "It is Winter, the old man from last year. He is not dead as the almanack says; he is the Regent for the Spring who is coming."

"When is the Spring coming?" said the sparrows. "We shall then have a good time of it and a better government; the old state of things was no good."

And Winter, wrapped in silent thought, nodded at the leafless

black forest, where every tree showed the pretty shapes and bends of the branches, and while Winter dozed the ice-cold cloudy mists sank down upon the earth. The ruler of the year was dreaming of the days of his youth and manhood, and at dawn the whole forest stood bright with hoar frost; it was Winter's dream of summer, and the sunshine shook the hoar frost from the branches in glittering drops.

"When is the Spring coming?" asked the sparrows.

"Spring!" It sounded like an echo from the high banks where the snow lay. And the sun shone warmer and warmer, the snow melted, the birds twittered, "Spring is coming!"

And high through the air came the first stork and the second stork followed; a pretty child sat on the back of each, and they sank down upon the open plain and they kissed the earth and they kissed the still, old man, and, like Moses on the mountain, he vanished in the clouds.

The Story of the Year was over.

"It is quite correct," said the sparrows, "and it is also very pretty, but it is not according to the almanack, so it's silly!"

THE ROSE ELF.[1]

In the midst of the garden grew a rose tree, it was quite full of roses, and in one of these, the loveliest of them all, dwelt an Elf; he was such a wee bit of a thing that no human eye could see him; he had a sleeping chamber behind every leaf of the rose; he was as well-made and lovely as any child could be, and had wings which reached right down from his shoulders to his feet. Oh, how fragrant was his dwelling, and how fair and bright its walls were, for were they not delicate pink rose leaves?

He took his pleasure in the sunshine all day long, flew from flower to flower, danced on the wings of the flying butterfly, and measured how many strides he had to take before he could run over all the roads and lanes that were on a single linden leaf. For what we call the veins of the linden leaf, he called roads and lanes. Yes; and to him they were endless roads, for before he had finished the sun went down; he had begun his measuring too late.

It was so cold, the dew fell and the wind blew. The best thing he could do now was to get home. He made as much haste

[1] The idea of this story is borrowed from Italian Folk-Lore.

as he could, but the rose had shut, he couldn't get in—not a single rose stood open. The poor little elf was so frightened; he had never been out at night before, he had always slept so sweetly behind the snug rose leaves. Oh, it will certainly be the death of him!

He knew that at the other end of the garden there was an arbour with lovely honeysuckles in it, the flowers looked like large, painted horns, he would creep into one of these and sleep there till morning. So thither he flew. Hush! There were two persons there, a handsome young man and the prettiest young lady; they were sitting side by side and wishing that they might never be parted more; they were so fond of each other, fonder than the best of children can be of their own father and mother.

"Yet part we must!" said the young man; "your brother is not our friend, and therefore he sends me away on a distant errand far over seas and mountains. Farewell, my sweet bride, for that indeed you are to me!"

And then they kissed each other and the young girl cried and gave him a rose; but before she handed it to him she pressed a kiss upon it, a kiss so lasting and intense that the flower opened. Then the little elf flew into it and leaned his head against the delicate, fragrant, walls, but he could hear "good bye!" said very well, and he felt that the rose had been placed on the young man's breast. Oh, how the heart was beating inside there! the little elf could not sleep a wink, it was beating so.

The rose did not long remain quiet on that breast, the young man took it out, and as he was going all alone through a dark forest, he kissed the flower, oh! so often, and so hard that

the little elf was very nearly crushed to death; he could feel through the leaves that the man's lips were burning hot, and the rose itself had expanded as when the mid-day sun is at its strongest.

Then another man came along, dark and wrathful; he was the pretty girl's wicked brother; he pulled out a knife so sharp and large, and while the other was kissing the rose, the wicked man stabbed him to death, cut off his head, and buried it with the body in the soft earth under the linden tree.

"Now he is hidden away and forgotten," thought the wicked brother, "he will never come back again. He had to take a long journey over sea and land; one can easily lose one's life on such an errand, and that's what he has done. He will come no more, and my sister dare not ask me about him."

So he raked together dry leaves over it with his foot and went home again through the dark night. He thought he was alone, but he was not. The little elf followed him, it sat in a withered, crumpled linden leaf which had fallen on to the wicked man's hair as he was digging the grave. He had now put his hat on again and it was so dark inside it, and the elf was trembling with terror and anger at the hideous deed.

At dawn the wicked man got home; he took off his hat and went into his sister's bedroom; there lay the beautiful blooming girl, dreaming of him she loved so much, and who, as she thought, was now journeying through forests and over mountains, and the wicked brother bent over her and laughed hideously, as only a devil can laugh; then the withered leaf fell from his hair down upon the counterpane, but he did not observe it, and went out to

have a little sleep himself in the broad daylight. But the elf crept out of the withered leaf, got into the ear of the sleeping girl and told her, as in a dream, of the frightful murder; described the spot where her brother had slain him and laid his corpse; told of the blooming linden tree close by, and said: "Lest thou shouldst fancy that 'tis only a dream I have told thee, thou shalt find on thy bed a withered leaf." And she did find it when she awoke.

And oh, what bitter tears did she not shed! and to no one dared she confide her sorrow. The window stood open all day, the little elf could have easily got out into the garden to the roses and all the other flowers, but he did not like to forsake the afflicted lady. In the window stood a damask rose tree; he sat him in one of these flowers and looked at the poor girl. Her brother came many times into the chamber, and he was so merry and wicked, but she dared not say a word about her great heart-sorrow. No sooner was it night than she crept out of the house and went into the wood to the spot where the linden tree stood, tore the load of leaves from the earth, dug deep down, and immediately found him who had been done to death. Oh! how she wept, and begged God that she too might soon die.

Gladly would she have taken the corpse home with her, but she could not; so she took the pale head with the closed eyes, kissed the cold mouth, and shook the earth off the lovely locks. "This shall be my own!" said she, and when she had laid earth and leaves on the dead body, she took the head home with her and a little branch of the jasmine tree which bloomed in the wood where he had been slain.

As soon as she was in her room again, she got the largest flower-

pot she could find, and in it she laid the dead man's head, put earth upon it, and then planted the jasmine branch in the pot.

"Farewell, farewell!" whispered the little elf; he could endure no longer the sight of all this sorrow, and therefore flew

out into the garden to his rose; but it had shed its bloom, only a few pale leaves were still hanging to the green hip.

"Alas! how soon it is all over with the Beautiful and the Good!" sighed the elf. At last he found another rose, and made it his house, behind its fine fragrant leaves he could dwell in comfort.

Every morning he flew to the poor damsel's window, and always found her standing by the flower-pot and weeping. The salt tears fell upon the jasmine bough, and as she every day grew paler and paler, the bough became fresher and greener, one shoot sprouted forth after another, and then came small, white flower-knobs, and she kissed them again and again. But the wicked brother stormed and swore and asked her if she was cracked. He did not understand why she was always crying over the flower-pot, and could not endure it. How was he to know what closed eyes were there and what red lips had there become earth? But she would bend her head over the flower-pot, and there the little Rose Elf would find her brooding, and then he used to creep into her ear and tell her about the evenings in the arbour and about the fragrance of the roses and the lives of the elves. She dreamed such sweet dreams and while she was so dreaming her life passed away; she had died a peaceful death, she was in heaven with him she loved so dearly.

And the jasmine flowers opened their large white bells, they breathed forth such wondrous fragrance, they could mourn the dead no other way.

But the wicked brother looked at the fair, blossoming tree and took it to himself as his inheritance, and put it into his bedchamber close beside his bed, for it was lovely to look upon, and the fragrance of it was so sweet and keen. The little Rose Elf followed and flew from flower to flower, in every one of which there dwelt a little sprite, and him he told about the dead, murdered man, whose head had now become earth to earth—told about the wicked brother and the poor sister.

"We know it!" said every sprite in every flower, "we know it! have we not grown out of the dead man's eyes and lips? We know it, we know it!" and then they nodded so strangely with their heads.

The Rose Elf could not understand how they could be so quiet about it, and so he flew out to the bees who were gathering honey and told them the story of the wicked brother, and the bees told it to their Queen, who commanded that they should all go next morning and kill the murderer. But the night before, it was the first night after his sister's death, as the brother was sleeping in his bed close beside the fragrant jasmine tree, every flower's calyx opened, and the souls of the flowers, invisible but armed with venomous darts, came out, and they sat first of all by his ears and told him evil dreams, and then they flew over his lips and struck him in the tongue with their poisonous darts. "Now we have avenged the dead!" said they, and back they went again to the white jasmine bells.

When it was morning and the window of the bedchamber was thrown open, the Rose Elf with the Queen Bee and the whole swarm rushed in to kill him. But he was already dead. People were standing round his bed and they said: "The jasmine scent has killed him!"

Then the Rose Elf understood the vengeance of the flowers, and he told it to the Queen Bee, and she buzzed with all her swarm around the flower-jar; the bees could not be driven away. Then a man took away the flower crock, and one of the bees stung his hand so that he let the crock fall, and it was broken to pieces.

Then they saw the white death's head, and they knew that the dead man in the bed was a murderer.

But the Queen Bee buzzed about in the air and sang of the vengeance of the flowers and about the Rose Elf, and how, behind the smallest leaf dwells one who can tell of wrong-doing, and avenge it.

THE BUCKWHEAT.

Often and often when one, after a thunderstorm, goes past a field where the buckwheat grows, one sees that it has been scorched quite black; it is just as if a flame of fire had passed over it, and the farmer then says, "It has got that from the lightning!" But *why* has it got it? Well, I'll tell you what the grey sparrow told me, and the grey sparrow heard it from an old willow tree which stood close to a field of buckwheat, and stands there still. It is such a big, respectable willow tree but old and wrinkled; it has been split right down the middle, and grass and bramble branches grow out of the rifts; the tree stoops forward, and its branches hang right down to the ground just as if they were long green locks of hair.

On all the fields round about grew corn—rye, barley and oats—yes, the pretty oats which looks, when ripe, like a whole swarm of little yellow canary birds on one branch. The corn stood in capital condition, and the heavier it was the deeper it bowed down in pious humility.

But there was also a field of buckwheat, and this field lay

right in front of the old willow tree. The buckwheat did not bow down at all like the other corn; on the contrary, it held its head on high quite stiff and proud.

"I am not, perhaps, so rich as the wheat," it said, "but at any rate I am much more handsome; my blossoms are as fine as the blossoms of the apple tree, 'tis a pleasure to look at me and mine; do you know any one more beautiful than we are, you old willow tree?"

And the willow tree nodded as if it would say, "Yes, I do, certainly!" but the buckwheat swelled with sheer pride, and said, "Silly old tree! Why, it is so old that grass is growing out of its maw!"

And now a terrible storm arose. All the flowers of the field folded their leaves or bowed their delicate heads while the storm passed away over them; but the buckwheat lifted high its head in its pride.

"Bow your head as we do!" said the flowers.

"I see not the slightest necessity for it!" said the buckwheat.

"Bow your head as we do!" cried the corn, "the angel of the storm comes flying along. He has wings which reach right down from the clouds to the earth, and he will cut you right down before you have time to beg him for mercy."

"Yes, but I won't bow down!" said the buckwheat.

"Close your flowers and bow your leaves!" said the old willow tree. "Don't look up at the lightning when the cloud bursts! Why, men themselves dare not do that, for one can see right into God's heaven through the lightning, but that is a sight to make even men blind; what will it be then with one of the

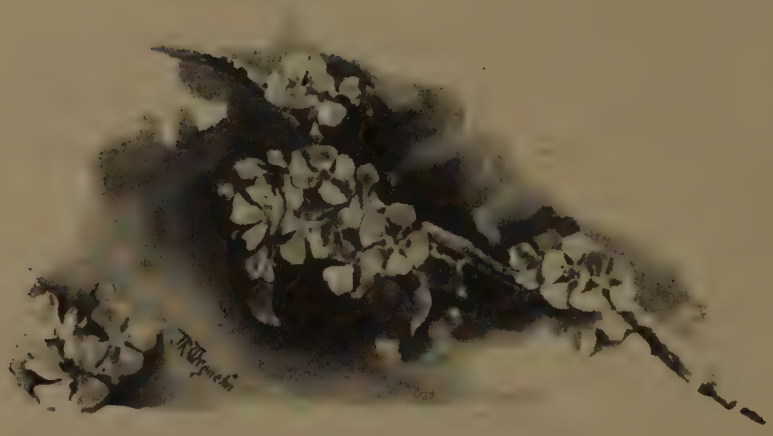
fruits of the earth? Should we who are so much lowlier presume to do the like?"

"So much lowlier, indeed!" said the buckwheat. "Now, I just mean to look into God's heaven!" and in its pride and haughtiness it did so. It was as though the whole universe stood in flames, it lightened so.

When the storm had passed over, the flowers and corn were standing there in the fresh, still air, so refreshed by the rain, but the buckwheat had been burnt as black as a coal by the lightning, it was now a dead and useless weed that cumbered the earth.

And the old willow tree moved its branches in the wind, and big water-drops fell down from the green leaves, as if the tree were weeping, and the sparrows asked, "Why are you weeping? It is so blissful here! Look how the sun is shining, look how the clouds are moving; can't you feel the fragrance from the flowers and bushes? Why are you weeping, you old willow tree?"

And the willow told about the pride, presumption, and punishment of the buckwheat; that's the usual course of things. I who tell this tale heard it from the sparrows—they told it to me one evening when I begged them for a story.



THERE'S THE DIFFERENCE.

It was in the month of May; the wind still blew cold, but Spring was there, the bushes, the trees, the fields and meadows said so. There were whole swarms of flowers right up into the quickset hedge, and there Spring was speaking for itself, it was speaking from a little apple tree; there was one branch so fresh, so blooming, with heaps and heaps of delicate, rosy-red buds just about to open; it knew very well itself how beautiful it was, for that sort of feeling is in the blade as well as in the blood, and so it was not a bit surprised when a grand coach stopped in front of it and the young countess said that the apple-tree branch was the sweetest sight imaginable, it was Spring itself in its most lovely manifestation.

[1] Andersen tells us that while on a visit at Christinelund, near Prestö, he saw an apple tree in full bloom which "so shone into and scented my thoughts, that I could not get rid of it till I had transplanted it into a story."

And the branch was broken off and the countess held it in her hand and shaded it with her silk parasol, and then they drove up to the castle, where there were lofty halls and splendid rooms. Bright white curtains were fluttering at the open windows, and lovely flowers stood in shining transparent vases, and in one of these (it looked as if it had been carved out of freshly-fallen snow), the apple branch was placed among fresh bright beech boughs; and a delightful sight it made.

And so the branch felt proud, and it was quite human in that respect.

All sorts of people passed through the rooms, and each of them expressed his admiration in his own way, and some said nothing and others said too much, and the apple branch understood that there was a difference between man and man just as there is between plant and plant. "Some are for show and some are for food, and there are some we could very well do without altogether," opined the apple branch, and as it was placed close by the open window, from whence it could see both down into the garden and right across the fields, it had lots and lots of flowers and plants to look at and think about; there they all stood, rich and poor, and some of them were very poor indeed.

"Poor rejected herbs!" said the apple-branch, "it is quite right that a difference should be made, and how unhappy they must feel (if that sort *can* feel as I and the like of me can); yes, it is quite right to make a difference, and a difference *must* be made or it would be all one, of course!"

And the apple-branch looked down upon them with a sort of compassion, and especially upon one sort of flower which grew in

large quantities in the fields and ditches. Nobody tied them into bouquets, they were too common; why, one came across them even among the stones of the bridge, they shot up like the most stubborn weeds, and so they had given to them the ugly name of "The devil's milk-pail." [1]

"Poor rejected plants!" said the apple-branch, "you cannot help being what you are; you cannot help being so common as to deserve the ugly name you bear; but it is with plants as with men, there *must* be a difference!"

"A difference, eh?" said the sunbeam, and it kissed the blossoming apple-branch, but it also kissed the yellow devil's milk-pail out in the field, all the sunbeam's brothers kissed them too, they kissed the poor flowers as well as the rich.

The apple-branch had never thought of our Lord's endless love for all that lives and moves in Him, it had never thought how much that is good and fair may lie hidden but not forgotten—but it was quite human in this respect too.

"The sunbeam, Light's ray, knew better. "You don't see very far and you don't see very clearly! Where is the rejected herb that you pity so much?"

"'Tis the devil's milk-pail!" said the apple-branch. "It is never tied into bouquets, but trodden under foot. There are too many of them, and when they run to seed, it flies in finely-clipped morsels of wool away over the road and sticks in people's clothes. 'Tis a weed! no doubt it is meant to be there; but I am really very thankful that I am not one of them."

And right over the fields came a whole heap of children, the

[1] The dandelion.

smallest of them was such a wee bit of a thing that the others carried it, and when it was put in the grass amongst the yellow flowers it laughed aloud for joy, kicked with its little legs, rolled about, plucked only the yellow flowers, and kissed them in its sweet innocence. The somewhat bigger children plucked the flowers off their hollow stalks and bound them all together, link by link, into chains; first a chain for the neck, then another to hang round the shoulders or the waist, on the bosom and on the head; it was quite a goodly show of green links and chains; but the biggest children carefully took the plants that had already bloomed, they took the stalk with its flake-like composite seed-crown, that loose, airy, wool-flower which is quite a tiny work of art as if made of the finest feathers, snow-flakes or down, and they held it close to their mouths in order to blow it right away with a single puff. Whoever could do that would get a new suit of clothes before the year was out, Grandmamma said so.

The despised flower was quite a prophet on this occasion.

"Do you see that?" said the sunbeam; "do you see its beauty, do you see its power?"

"Yes, for children!" said the apple-bough.

And out into the field came an old woman, and she dug with her blunt knife (it hadn't even a handle) right down beneath the roots of the flower and pulled it up; from some of the roots she meant to boil herself a little coffee, others she meant to sell for money by taking them to the apothecary who used them in his medicines.

"Beauty though is something much superior!" said the apple-bough. "Only the elect enter into the Kingdom of Beauty!

There's a difference between plants just as there's a difference between men."

And the sunbeams told of the endless love of God towards all creation and all that had life, and of the equal distribution of everything in time and in eternity.

"Yes, but that is only your opinion," said the apple-bough.

And some people came into the room and the young countess, she who had placed the apple-bough so nicely in the transparent vase where the sunbeams shone, came too; and she brought a flower or something which was hidden by three or four large leaves wrapped round it like a paper screen to keep it from hurt and harm, draught or pressure, and it was carried far more carefully than ever the fine apple-bough had been carried. And now the big leaves were put aside quite gently and one saw the delicate, flake-like seed-crown of a yellow despised devil's milk pail. That was what she had plucked so carefully and was carrying so tenderly lest a single one of the fine feathery darts which give it its aërial shape and sit so lightly should be blown off. She had it in its full glory, and she admired its beauteous shape, its airy brightness, its whole peculiar composition, its beauty which a puff of wind would blow away.

"Just look how wondrously beautiful our Lord has made it!" said she; "I want to paint it along with the apple-bough. The apple-bough indeed is wondrously beautiful to every eye, but this poor flower also has received just as much from our Lord, only in another way; so different they are, and yet both of them are children in the Kingdom of Beauty!"

And the sunbeam kissed the poor flower and it kissed the blossoming apple bough, whose leaves seemed to redden thereat.

THUMBELISA.

THERE was once a woman who wanted so very much to have a wee, wee, little child, but had no idea whatever where she should get one from, so she went to an old witch and said to her, "I do so long to have a little child; won't you tell me where I can get one from?" "Well, we'll very soon get over that difficulty!" said the witch. "There you have a barley-corn; it is not at all of that sort which grows in the farmer's fields, or that fowls get to eat. Put it in a flower-pot and you'll see something, I promise you." "Thank you kindly," said the woman, and she gave the witch twelve silver pennies, went home, planted the barley-corn, and immediately a beautiful flower grew up which looked just like a tulip, but the leaves were all folded tightly together as if it were still budding. "That's a pretty flower!" said the woman; and she kissed it on its lovely red and yellow leaves, but at the very moment when she was kissing it the flower gave a loud crack and opened. It was a real tulip, any one could see that, but on the green chair, right in the middle of the flower, sat a wee, wee, little girl, so nice and fine. She was only a thumb long, so

they called her *Thumbelisa.* She got a splendidly varnished walnut-shell for her cradle, blue violet-leaves were her mattresses, and a rose-leaf her counterpane; there she slept at night, but in the day-time she played on the table, where the woman had put a plate which she had surrounded with a whole wreath of flowers with their stalks stuck into the water; here a large tulip leaf floated about, and on this leaf Thumbelisa had to sit and sail from one end of the plate to the other; she had two white horse-hairs to row with. It was such a pretty sight! She could sing too oh! so nicely and softly, never had the like of it been heard before.

One night, as she lay in her pretty bed, a nasty toad came hopping in at the window; there was a broken pane there. The toad was so ugly, big, and wet, and it hopped right down upon the very table where Thumbelisa lay sleeping beneath the red rose-leaf. "That would make a very nice wife for my son," said the toad; and with that she took hold of the walnut-shell in which Thumbelisa lay and hopped away with her through the broken pane down into the garden. A large broad river was running there, but just close by the bank it was all swampy and muddy, and there the toad and her son lived together. Ugh! he too was nasty and ugly, just like his mother. "Koax-koax-brekke-ke-kex!" that was all he could say when he saw the pretty little girl in the walnut-shell. "Don't chatter so loudly or else you'll wake her!" said the old toad; "she could give us the slip even now, for she is as light as swan's down. We'll put her out in the river, on one of the broad water-lily leaves, she is so light and little that it will be quite an island to her. She can't run

away from there while we are getting the state-chamber ready under the mud where you are to live and keep house."

Out in the river grew many clumps of water-lilies with broad, green leaves, they looked as if they were floating on the surface of the water; the leaf which was farthest out was also the biggest of all; the old toad swam out to it and placed Thumbelisa, nut-shell and all, on the top of it. The poor wee, little creature awoke quite early in the morning, and when she saw where she was, she began to cry bitterly, for there was water on every side of the big green leaf, she couldn't get ashore anyhow. The old toad was sitting down in the mud and tidying up her room with rushes and yellow sedges, she was determined that her new daughter-in-law should find it really nice and tidy, and after that she swam out with her ugly son towards the leaf where Thumbelisa was sitting; they wanted to fetch away her pretty bed, it was to be put into the bridal-chamber before she came there herself. The old toad bowed low in the water to her and said, "Let me introduce my son; he is to be your husband, and you will live together pleasantly down in the mud." "Koax-koax-brekke-ke-kex!" that was all her son could say for himself. So they took the stately little bed and swam away with it, but Thumbelisa sat quite alone upon the green leaf and began to cry, for she didn't want to live in the nasty toad's house, or have her ugly son for a husband. The little fishes who were swimming in the water below had had a good look at the toad and heard what she said, and that was why they stuck their heads up; they wanted to see the little girl. As soon as they caught sight of her they thought her so pretty, and they were quite

angry at the idea of her going down to the ugly toad. No, that should never be. They flocked around the green stalk below the water which held up the leaf and gnawed it quite through with their teeth, and so the leaf floated down the river away with Thumbelisa, far, far away, whither the toad could not come.

Thumbelisa sailed past such a lot of places and the little birds sat in the bushes, looked at her, and sang, "What a pretty little maiden!" The leaf, with her upon it, swam farther and farther away; thus little Thumbelisa went abroad on her travels.

A pretty little white butterfly kept hovering about her, and at last it sat down on the leaf, for it had taken quite a fancy to Thumbelisa, and she was happy, for now the toad could not get at her, and it was very pretty where she was sailing; the sun shone upon the water, it was like glistening gold. Then she took off her girdle and tied one end of it round the butterfly, but the other end she fastened to the leaf; then it glided away more quickly than ever, and she too, for now she actually stood upon the leaf.

At that moment a big cockchafer came flying along, caught sight of her and instantly put its claw round her dainty waist and flew up into a tree with her; but the green leaf went swimming down the river and the butterfly along with it, for he was fastened to the leaf and could not get loose. Gracious! how frightened, to be sure, poor little Thumbelisa was when the cockchafer flew up into the tree with her, but she was most anxious about the pretty white butterfly which she had tied fast to the leaf; if he couldn't get loose, surely he must starve to death!

But the cockchafer didn't trouble himself about that a bit. He sat down with her on the largest green leaf in the tree, gave her syrup out of the flowers to eat, and told her that she was very pretty, although she did not resemble a cockchafer in the least. After that all the other cockchafers who lived in the tree came and paid them a visit; they looked at Thumbelisa, and the Miss Cockchafers shrugged their feelers and said, "Why, she has

only got two legs, what a fright she looks!" "She has no feelers at all," they went on, "just look how slim her waist is! Fie! if she doesn't look just like a human being! How ugly she is!" All the she-cockchafers said this, and yet Thumbelisa was pretty after all. The cockchafer who had run off with her had thought so too, but as all the others said she was ugly, he got at last to believe that she really was ugly, and would have

nothing more to do with her; she might go where she liked, he said. They flew down from the tree with her and put her on a daisy; there she sat and wept because she was so ugly that even the cockchafers would have nothing to do with her. And yet she was the loveliest little thing you can imagine, as fine and delicate as the most beautiful rose leaf.

All through the summer poor Thumbelisa lived quite alone in the large wood. She plaited herself a bed of grass-stalks and hung it under a large dock-leaf so that the rain could not fall upon her; she gathered sweets from the flowers for her food, and drank of the dew which stood, every morning, upon the leaves; thus summer and autumn passed away, but now winter had come, the long, cold winter. All the birds that had sung so prettily to her flew their way, the trees and the flowers withered, the large dock-leaf she had lived under crumpled up and became a yellow, withered stalk, and she felt horribly cold, for her clothes were in rags and she herself was so small and delicate that she was bound to freeze to death. Poor little Thumbelisa! And now it began to snow, and every snowflake which fell upon her was just as if one were to cast a whole spadeful of snow upon one of us, for we are big and she was but a thumb long. Then she wrapped herself up in a withered leaf, but it wouldn't warm her a bit, she shivered with cold.

Close by the wood whither she had now come lay a large corn-field, but the corn had long since been carried away; only the bare, dry stubble stood upon the frozen ground. To her indeed it was just like a great wood; oh, how she shivered as she went through it! And thus she came to the field-mouse's door. It was a little hole right under the corn-stubble. There dwelt the field-mouse, quite

warm and cosy; she had a whole room full of corn, a nice kitchen and larder. Poor Thumbelisa stood outside the door, just like some poor beggar-girl, and begged for a little bit of barley-corn, for she had not had the least bit to eat for two days.

"You poor little wretch!" said the field-mouse, for, at bottom, it was a good old field-mouse; "come into my warm room and dine with me!"

As now she thought well of Thumbelisa, she said, "You are quite welcome to remain with me all the winter, but you must keep my room nice and clean and tell me stories, for I am very fond of hearing stories." And Thumbelisa did what the good old mouse demanded of her, and had a very nice time of it.

"We shall soon be having a visitor," said the field-mouse one day; "my neighbour is wont to pay me a visit every day of the week. He is better housed even than I am, for he has vast halls and goes about in a beautiful black fur pelisse; if only you could get him for a husband, you would indeed be well provided for, but unfortunately he cannot see. Now mind, tell him the very prettiest stories you know." But Thumbelisa did not trouble her head about it a bit she didn't want to have anything whatever to do with the neighbour, for he was a mole. So he came and paid them a visit in his black fur pelisse; he was very rich and learned, said the field-mouse, his domestic accommodation moreover was ten times as large as the field-mouse's; but he absolutely could not endure the sun and the pretty flowers, and he spoke slightingly about them, for he had never seen them. Thumbelisa had to sing to him and she sang, "Fly away, Cock-chafer!" and "The Blackcap trips the meadow along." So the mole

fell in love with her for her sweet voice's sake, but he said nothing at the time, he was such a very discreet person. He had recently dug himself a long passage under the earth from his own house to theirs, and the field-mouse and Thumbelisa got permission to walk about there whenever they liked. At the same time he told them not to be frightened of the dead bird which lay in the passage; it was a whole bird with feathers and beak, which certainly must have died quite recently, when the winter began, and had been buried just where he was making his passage. The mole took a piece of touchwood in his mouth, for it shines just like fire in the dark, and went in front to light them through the long, dark, passage. When they came to where the dead bird lay, the mole put his broad nose against the ceiling and shovelled up the earth till there was a large hole through which the light could shine. In the middle of the floor lay a dead swallow, with its pretty wings pressed closed down to its sides, its head and legs were drawn in beneath its feathers; the poor bird had certainly died of cold. Thumbelisa was very sorry for it, she was fond of all little birds; had they not sung and twittered for her so prettily all through the summer? But the mole gave a kick at it with his short legs and said, "It will whistle no more now. How miserable it must be to be born a little bird! Thank God, none of my children will be *that!* Birds like that have nothing in the world but their 'Kwee-wit! Kwee-wit!' and must starve to death in the winter, stupid things!"

"You may well say that, sensible creature as you are," remarked the field-mouse. "What has a bird to show for itself when the winter comes, for all its 'Kwee-witting'? It must starve and freeze to death: very romantic, I dare say!"

Thumbelisa said nothing, but when the other two had turned their backs upon the bird, she bent down over it, brushed the feathers aside which lay over its head, and kissed it on its closed eyes. "Perhaps it was this very one which sang so prettily to me in the summer," she thought; "what a lot of joy it gave me, the lovely, darling bird!"

The mole now stopped up the hole through which the daylight shone and escorted the ladies home. But at night Thumbelisa could not sleep a bit, so she rose from her bed and plaited a large and pretty carpet of hay, and she took it down with her and spread it round about the dead bird, and laid soft wool, which she had found in the field-mouse's room, at the sides of the bird, that it might have a warm bed on the cold earth. "Farewell, you pretty little bird!" said she, "farewell, and thank you for your pretty song in the summer-time, when all the trees were green and the sun shone so warmly upon us!" Then she laid her head on the bird's breast, but the same instant was very much startled, for it was just as if something was going "Thump! thump!' inside it. It was the bird's heart. The bird was not dead, it lay in a swoon and had now got warm, and was coming back to life again. In the autumn all the swallows fly away to warmer lands, but if there be one that remains behind, it gets so cold that it falls right down as if dead and remains lying where it falls, and the cold snow comes and covers it up. Thumbelisa actually trembled, so frightened was she, for really the bird was a big, big creature, compared with her who was only a thumb long; but she plucked up her courage, laid the cotton-wool more thickly round the poor swallow, and fetched a leaf of curled mint, which had served her as a counterpane, and placed it over

the bird's head. The following night she again crept down to it, and there it was quite alive, but so faint that it could only open its eye for a second and look at Thumbelisa, who stood there with a little piece of touchwood in her hand, for she had no other light.

"Many thanks, you pretty little child!" said the sick swallow to her. "I have got so nice and warm. I shall soon get back my strength, and be able to fly away again into the warm sunshine."

"Oh!" said she, "it is so cold outside, it is snowing and freezing! You keep in your warm bed, I'll be sure to take care of you." She brought the swallow water in a flower-leaf; it drank, and told her how it had torn one of its wings on a thornbush, and therefore could not fly so strongly as the other swallows, when they flew away—far, far away to the warm lands. Then it had fallen to the ground, but it could not remember anything more, and didn't know in the least how it had got there.

It remained down there the whole winter, and Thumbelisa was very kind to it and loved it very much. Neither the mole nor the field-mouse was told a word about it, for they absolutely could not endure the poor wretched swallow, Thumbelisa knew that.

As soon as the spring came and the sun warmed up the earth, the swallow said good-bye to Thumbelisa, who opened the hole which the mole had made in the ceiling. The sun then shone in upon them so nicely, and the swallow asked if she would not go along with him, she could sit on his back and they would fly far out into the green wood. But Thumbelisa knew that it would grieve the old field-mouse if she left her like that. "No, I cannot," said Thumbelisa. "Good-bye, good-bye! you good, pretty

little girl!" said the swallow, and flew out into the sunshine. Thumbelisa looked after it, and the tears came to her eyes, for she was very fond of the poor swallow. "Kwee-wit! Kwee-wit!" sang the bird, and flew away into the green wood. Thumbelisa was so sorrowful. She couldn't get leave anyhow to go into the warm sunshine; the corn which had been sown in the field, right over the field-mouse's house, grew high up into the air, it was quite a thick wood to the poor little girl who was only a thumb long.

"Now this summer you must sew away at your *trousseau*," the field-mouse said to her, for by this time their neighbour, the tiresome mole, had come a-wooing her. "You must have both linen and woollen in your wardrobe. When you become the mole's bride you must sit down in the best and lie down in the best also." So Thumbelisa had to spin away at her distaff, and the field-mouse hired four spiders, who had to spin and weave night and day. Every evening the mole paid them a visit, and he always talked about the same thing, and said that when the summer came to an end the sun would not shine so hotly and bake the earth as hard as a stone. Yes, and when summer was over the wedding with Thumbelisa was to take place; but she didn't like that at all, for she cared not a single bit for the tiresome mole. Every morning when the sun arose, and every evening when it set, she crept out of doors, and when the wind parted the tops of the corn, so that she could see the blue sky, she thought how light and lovely it was outside there, and longed so much to see the dear swallow once more. But it never came back again; it must certainly have flown far away into the nice green wood.

Now when autumn came Thumbelisa's outfit was quite ready.

"In four weeks you shall be married," said the field-mouse to her. But Thumbelisa began to cry, and said that she wouldn't have the tiresome mole.

"Fiddlesticks!" said the field-mouse; "don't be obsternacious,[1] or I'll bite you with my white teeth. Such a handsome husband as you're going to have too! what more do you want? The Queen herself has not the like of his black fur pelisse. He has lots too in both kitchen and cellar. Thank God for such a husband, say I!"

And so they were to be married. The mole had already come to fetch Thumbelisa away; she was to dwell with him deep down in the ground, and never come up into the warm sunlight at all, for he could not abide it. The poor child was so distressed. She was now to bid the beautiful sun farewell, for while she lived with the field-mouse she was always allowed to look at the sun from the threshold of the door anyhow. "Farewell, thou bright sun!" she said, and stretched out her arms high in the air, and even went a little way beyond the field-mouse's door, for the corn had been garnered, and only the dry stubble stood there now. "Farewell, farewell!" cried she, and threw her tiny arms round a little red flower which stood there. "Greet the dear swallow from me if you get a glimpse of him!"

"Kwee-wit! Kwee-wit!" it sounded at that very moment above her head. She looked up. It was the swallow that was just passing by. As soon as he saw Thumbelisa he was delighted. She told him how she loathed the idea of having the nasty mole

[1] *Obsternasig*, a colloquial comic word. The field-mouse was talking grand and meant to say "obstinate."

for a husband, and living with him deep down under ground where the sun never shone. And she could not keep back her tears as she told him.

"The cold winter is coming now," said the swallow; "I am going to fly far away to the warm lands, will you come with me? You can sit upon my back. You have only to tie yourself fast on with your girdle, and then we'll fly right away from the nasty mole and his dark room; we'll fly far away over the mountains to the warm land where the sun shines lovelier than here, where there is always summer with its beautiful flowers. Do, pray, fly away with me, you sweet little Thumbelisa, who saved my life when I lay frozen in the dark earthy cellar!"

"Yes, I'll go with you," said Thumbelisa, and she sat down on the bird's back with her feet on its outspread wings, tied her belt fast to one of its strongest feathers, and then the swallow flew high into the air, over wood and over sea, high up over the big mountains where snow always lies, and Thumbelisa was almost frozen in the cold air, but then she crept right under the bird's warm feathers, and only popped out her little head to see all the beautiful things beneath her.

And so they came to the warm land. There the sun shone much more brightly than here, the sky was twice as high, and over hedge and ditch grew the loveliest green and blue grapes. In the woods hung citrons and oranges, here there was a fragrance of mint and myrtles, and along the roads ran the loveliest children and played with large speckled butterflies. But the swallows flew still farther away, and everything became prettier and prettier. Beneath the splendid green trees near a blue lake stood a dazzling

white marble palace from the olden times, the vine tendrils twined up and around the high pillars, and up at the very top was a number of swallow-nests; and in one of these dwelt the swallow who had carried Thumbelisa.

"Here is my house," said the swallow, "but pray choose now one of the most splendid of the flowers that grow down there, and then I'll put you there and you shall have as blissful a time of it as you can desire."

"Oh, that will be lovely!" cried she, and she clapped her tiny hands.

There on the ground lay a large white marble column which had fallen to the ground and broken into three pieces, and between them grew the loveliest large white flowers. The swallow flew down with Thumbelisa and put her on one of the broad leaves; but how amazed was she when she saw a little man sitting in the very centre of the flower, as white and transparent as if he were of glass! He had on his head the most elegant tiny gold crown and the prettiest bright wings on his shoulders, and he was not a bit bigger than Thumbelisa. He was the angel of the flower. In every flower there lived some such little man or woman, but he was the King over the whole lot of them.

"Gracious, how handsome he is!" whispered Thumbelisa to the swallow. The little prince was quite frightened at the swallow, for compared with him, who was so small and delicate, it was a gigantic bird, but when he saw Thumbelisa he was delighted; she was the very prettiest girl he had ever seen. Thereupon he took his gold crown from off his head and put it upon hers, asked her her name and if she would be his wife, for then she would be the

Queen over all the flowers! Yes, that was something like a husband, and very different from the son of a toad, or a mole in his black fur pelisse. She therefore said "Yes" to the pretty prince, and from every flower came forth a lord or a lady, and all so graceful that it was a joy to behold them. Every one of them brought Thumbelisa a present, but the best of all was a pair of pretty wings from a large white fly; they were fastened on to Thumbelisa's back, and so she could now fly from flower to flower. There was such a merry-making, and the swallow sat high up in his nest and sang to them as well as he could, but at heart he was much distressed, for he was very fond of Thumbelisa and would have liked to have been with her always.

"You shall not be called Thumbelisa any more," said the angel of the flower to her; "it is an ugly name and you are so lovely. We will call you Maya."

"Farewell, farewell!" said the swallow, and flew away again from the warm land—far, far away back to Denmark. There it had a little nest over the window where the man lives who can tell fairy tales, and it sang to him, "Kwee-wit! Kwee-wit!" And that is where we got this story from.

THE WICKED PRINCE.

THERE was once a wicked and overweening Prince, whose whole mind was bent upon winning all the countries of the world and striking terror with his name. Fire and sword marked his onward progress; his soldiers trod down the corn in the fields, they set fire to the peasants' huts, so that the red flames licked the leaves from the trees, and the baked fruit hung on the black and charred branches. Many a wretched mother hid herself behind the reeking wall with her naked suckling at her breast, and the soldiers sought after her, and if they found her and her child, then their devilish joy first began—evil spirits could not have done worse. But to the Prince's mind all this was just as it should be. Day by day his power increased, his name was universally feared, and fortune followed him in all his doings. He drew gold and vast treasures from the conquered towns; and wealth, the like of which was not to be found in any other place, was amassed in his capital. And now he built him splendid palaces, churches, and triumphal arches, and every one who saw these glories said "What a great Prince!" They never thought of the distress he had brought upon other lands;

they did not hear the weeping and wailing which rose up from the devastated cities.

The Prince looked at his gold, looked at his splendid edifices, and then thought, as the majority of men thought, "What a great Prince I am! But I must have more, much more! It must never be said that any other power is greater than mine, or even as great," and he went to war with all his neighbours, and conquered them all. He chained the vanquished kings to his car with chains of gold, and so made them drag him through the streets whenever he would take a drive; and when he sat at table they had to lie down at his feet, and at the feet of his courtiers, and pick up the crumbs of bread which were thrown to them.

And now this Prince had his statue set up in the market-places, and in the royal palace—nay, he would have had it placed in the churches, before the very altar of the Lord, but the priests said, "O Prince! thou art great; but God is greater still. We dare not do it!"

"Well," said that evil Prince, "then I will overcome God likewise!" and in the pride and haughtiness of his heart he built him a most cunning ship wherewith he would navigate the air; it was as variegated as the neck of the peacock, and seemed to be starred with a thousand eyes, but every eye was a gun-barrel. The Prince sat in the midst of this ship, he had only to press a spring and a thousand bullets flew out, whereupon the barrels were immediately loaded again as before. Hundreds of strong eagles were harnessed to this ship, and then away he flew towards the sun. The earth lay far below him; at first it looked, with all its mountains and forests, merely like a ploughed-up field, where the

green patches peep up from the midst of the over-turned turf; then it resembled a flat chart, and soon it was lost altogether in clouds and mist. Higher and higher flew the eagles. Then God sent forth a single one of his countless angels, and the wicked Prince discharged a thousand bullets at him. But the bullets fell back like spent hailstones from the angel's shining wings. One drop of blood, only one solitary drop, dripped down from the white feathers, and that drop fell upon the ship wherein the Prince sat. It was like a burning flame, and it weighed as heavily as a thousand tons of lead, and bore the ship down towards the earth with it at a breakneck pace. The strong wings of the eagles were snapped; the wind whizzed around the Prince's head, and the clouds round about (formed doubtless from the cities he had burnt) took threatening shapes, like crabs, miles long, which stretched out their strong claws after him, or like rolling masses of rocks or fire-belching dragons. Half dead the Prince lay in the ship, which at last remained suspended between the thick branches of the forest.

"I *will* vanquish God!" cried he. "I have sworn it—my will is law!" and he took seven years to build a most cunning ship to navigate the air with. He had thunderbolts forged of the hardest steel, for he would storm the fortresses of Heaven. He got together a vast host from all his domains, and when they stood side by side in battle array, they covered a circuit of many miles. They mounted the cunningly-devised ship, and the King himself was about to take his seat therein, when God sent forth a swarm of gnats, a single little swarm of gnats, which buzzed about the King and stung his hands and face. In his rage he drew his sword, but only beat the empty air, the gnats he could not touch. Then he

commanded that costly carpets should be brought thither, and these they were to wrap around him, so that no midge could pierce through them with its sting; and they did as he commanded. But one little midge made its way into the innermost carpet, crept into the King's ear, and stung him there. It burnt like fire, the venom flew to his brain; he broke loose from the ship, tore off all the carpets, rent his clothes asunder, and danced all naked in the midst of his coarse and savage soldiers, who now mocked at the mad Prince who would fain have stormed the courts of God Himself, and was immediately overcome by a single little midge.

THE WILD SWANS.

Far away from here, in the land whither the swallows fly when we have winter, dwelt a King who had eleven sons, and one daughter called Elisa. The eleven brothers (they were Princes, remember) went to school with stars on their breasts and swords by their sides. They wrote upon gold slates with diamond pencils, and said their lessons right off both backwards and forwards, so that one could see at once that they were Princes. Their sister Elisa used to sit on a little stool made of looking-glass, and had a picture-book which was worth half the kingdom. Oh, what a happy time these children had, but it was not to last for ever!

Their father, who was King over the whole land, married a wicked Queen, who was not at all kind to the poor children. They could see the difference the very first day. There was a great to-do in the palace, and the children played at visitors, but instead of the cakes and roasted apples they used to get, she gave them only sand in a teacup, and told them to make believe that it was something else. A week after that she packed off little Elisa away into the country with some peasant people, and it was not very long before she got the

King to believe so many bad things of the poor Princes that he absolutely troubled his head about them no more.

"Fly away into the world and shift for yourselves!" said the wicked Queen. "Fly away as big birds that cannot speak!" But she could not make it as bad for them as she wished, for they became eleven beautiful wild swans. With a strange cry, they flew out of the castle windows right away over the park and wood. It was still quite early in the morning when they passed by the place where their sister Elisa lay asleep in the peasant's hut; here they swept over the roof, stretched out their long necks, and flapped their wings, but no one either heard or saw them. They had again to take to flight, high up towards the clouds, far out into the wide world; away they flew and settled in a large dark forest, which stretched right down towards the strand.

Poor little Elisa stood in the hut and played with a green leaf, she had no other plaything; and she made a hole in the leaf, peeped through it at the sun, and then it seemed to her as if she saw her brothers' bright eyes, and every time the warm sunbeams shone upon her cheeks she thought of all their kisses.

One day passed just like another. When the breeze blew through the large rose-bushes outside the house, it whispered to the roses, "Who can be lovelier than ye?" But the roses shook their heads, and said, "Elisa is!" And when the old peasant woman sat at the door on Sunday, and read her hymn-book, the wind would turn over the leaves and say to the book, "Who can be more pious than you?" "Elisa is!" said the hymn-book; and what the roses and the hymn-book said was only the simple truth.

She was to return home when she was fifteen years old, and

when the Queen saw how lovely she was, she was wroth and hated her; she would have liked to turn her into a wild swan like her brothers, but she dared not do it on the spot, because the King wished to see his daughter once more.

Early in the morning the Queen went to her bath. It was built of marble, and adorned with soft cushions and the loveliest carpets, and she took with her three toads, kissed them, and said to one of them, "Sit upon Elisa's head when she gets into the bath, that she may become sluggish like you!" To the second she said, "You sit upon her forehead that she may become ugly like you, so that her father may not know her again!" And to the third she whispered, "Nestle near her heart, that she may have an evil conscience to torture her!" Then she put the toads into the clear water, which immediately turned green, called Elisa, undressed her, and made her descend into the water, and while she ducked her head one of the toads sat in her hair, the second on her forehead, and the third on her breast; but Elisa did not seem to notice it in the least. No sooner had she come to the surface again than three red poppies floated on the water; had not the beasts been venomous and kissed by the witch, they would have turned into red roses, but flowers they became anyhow from resting on Elisa's head and near her heart; evil spells could have no power over one so innocent and holy.

When the wicked Queen saw this, she rubbed her all over with walnut juice till she was tanned a dirty brown, smeared her sweet face with an ill-smelling salve, and ruffled her beautiful hair all over, so that it was impossible to recognise pretty Elisa. When, therefore, her father saw her he was quite horrified, and said that it was not his daughter. Indeed, no one would have anything to do with her

but the watch-dog and the swallows, but they were only poor animals who had nothing to say for themselves. Then poor Elisa fell a-weeping, and thought of her eleven brothers who were all far away. Much afflicted, she crept out of the palace, and wandered all day over marsh and moor into the vast forest. She had no idea whither she wanted to go, but she felt so sad, and yearned after her brothers. Like her, they had been driven into the wide world, and she wanted to seek and find them. She had only been a short time in the wood when night fell. She had altogether lost her way, so she lay down on the soft moss, said her evening prayer, and laid her head against the stump of a tree. It was so still there; the air was so mild, and all about her, in the grass and on the moss, hundreds of glowworms shone like green fire, and when she softly touched one of the branches with her hand, the sparkling insects rained down like falling stars. The whole night she dreamed about her brothers. They were playing together again as children, writing with diamond pencils on their golden slates, and looking at the lovely picture-book that was worth half the kingdom; but they wrote upon the slates not noughts and crosses as heretofore, but the heroic deeds they had done, and all that they had seen and experienced. And in the picture-book everything was alive; the birds sang, and the people came out of the book and talked to Elisa and her brothers; but when she turned the leaf over they immediately jumped in again, so that none of the pictures might be out of place.

When she awoke the sun was already high in the heavens. She could not actually see it, indeed, for the lofty trees spread out their branches thick and fast; but the sunbeams glanced through like wavy gold gauze. There was a fragrance of green things, and

the birds all but perched on her shoulders. She heard the splashing of water, for there were many large cascades; they all fell into a dam, which had the loveliest sandy bottom. It is true that thick bushes grew all round it, but in one place the stags had dug a great gap, and through it Elisa went down to the water, which was so clear that if the wind had not stirred the branches and bushes and made them move, she would have fancied that they were painted on the bottom, so plainly did all the leaves mirror themselves there, both those through which the sun shone and those which lay quite in the shade.

No sooner did she catch sight of her own face than she was horrified, so brown and ugly it looked; but when she had moistened her little hand, and passed it over her eyes and forehead, the white skin shone through again; then she took off all her clothes and went into the fresh water—a lovelier royal child was not to be found in the whole world.

Now when she had dressed herself again, and had plaited her long hair, she went to the bubbling spring, drank out of her hollow hand, and wandered farther into the wood without herself knowing whither. She thought of her brothers, she thought of God, who would surely never forsake her. 'Tis He who makes the crab-apples grow to feed the hungry, and He showed her such a tree, the branches bent down beneath their fruit. There she had her dinner, and, after putting props under the branches, went on into the darkest part of the wood. It was so still that she could hear her own foot-steps; she could hear every little withered leaf which bent beneath her foot. Not a bird was to be seen, not a sunbeam could penetrate through the large thick branches; the lofty trunks stood so close to

each other that when she looked straight before her it was just as if she were surrounded by row after row of huge railings. Oh, here was a solitude she had never known before!

The night was so dark; not a single little glowworm twinkled on the moss. Sad at heart, she laid her down to sleep, and it seemed to her as if the branches of the tree above her parted on both sides, and our Lord with gentle eyes looked down upon her, and little angels peeped over His head, and from under His arm. When she awoke in the morning, she did not know whether she had dreamed this or whether it had really happened. She went a few steps forward, and she met an old woman with a basket of berries, and the old woman gave her some. Elisa asked her if she had seen eleven Princes ride through the forest. "No," said the old woman; "but I saw yesterday eleven swans, with gold crowns on their heads, swimming down the river close by here." And she led Elisa a step farther to a steep slope, at the foot of which was a winding river. The trees on its banks stretched their long leafy branches towards each other, and where they could not come together by means of their natural growth, they had uprooted themselves from the soil and leaned over the water with interlocked branches. Elisa said farewell to the old woman, and went along the river to where it flowed out into the large open sea. The whole of the beautiful sea lay before the young girl, but not a sail appeared on it, not a boat was to be seen; how would she be able to pursue her journey farther? She looked at the countless pebbles on the beach; the water had made them all round. Glass, iron, stone, everything that had been cast up there, had been fashioned thus by the water, which nevertheless was far softer than her delicate hand. "It rolls

untiringly, and everything that is hard becomes smooth. I will be just as untiring! Thanks for your lesson, ye clear, rolling billows! My heart tells me that you will one day carry me to my brothers."

On the sea-wrack on the shore lay eleven white swan feathers, and she made a bouquet of them. Drops of water lay upon them, but none could tell whether it was dew or tears. It was lonely by the strand, but she did not feel it, for the sea was for ever changing; there was more variety there every few hours than the fresh inland lakes can show in a twelvemonth. If a large black cloud came sailing along, it was as though the sea would say, "I, too, can look black!" and then the blast blew, and the billows turned their white side outwards; but when the clouds gleamed red, and the wind slept, then the sea was like a rose-leaf: at one time it was green, at another, white; but, however gently it rested, there was always a gentle surge on the shore: the water sank, and fell as gently as the breast of a sleeping child.

When the sun was about to set, Elisa saw eleven white swans, with gold crowns on their heads, flying landwards. They flew one behind the other, so that it looked like a long white ribbon. Then Elisa climbed up the slope and hid herself behind a bush; and the swans settled down close beside her, and flapped their large white wings.

The sun dipped beneath the water, and suddenly the swans' plumage fell off, and there stood eleven handsome Princes—Elisa's brothers. She uttered a loud shriek, for, although they were much altered, she knew that it was they—she felt it must be they; she sprang into their arms, and called them by their names; and they were happy when they saw and recognised their little sister, who

had now become so big and beautiful. They laughed, and they cried, and very soon they had made each other understand how wickedly their stepmother had treated them all.

"We brothers," said the eldest of them, "fly about as wild swans so long as the sun is in the sky; but when it sets we take again our human shape; therefore we must always take care to have a resting-place for our feet at sunset, for if we are flying among the clouds at that time, we may as men fall down in the deep. We do not live here. A land just as beautiful as this lies beyond the sea, but the way thither is long; we have to cross over the vast sea, and there is not an island on the way where we can pass the night, save one lonely little rock which towers up in the midst of it, a rock just big enough for us to rest upon when we all crouch side by side; if the sea is rough the water splashes all over us; but yet we thank God for this little rock. There we pass the night in the shape of men, but for it we should never be able to visit our dear native land, for we require the two longest days in the year for our flight. Only once a year are we permitted to visit the home of our fathers; eleven days we may remain here, then we fly away over the great forest, whence we can view the castle where we were born and where our father dwells, and see the high tower of the church where our mother lies buried. Here the very trees and bushes seem to be of our kin; here the wild horses gallop over the plains as we saw them do in our childhood; here the charcoal-burners sing the very same songs we used to dance to when we were children. Here is our fatherland, hither we are drawn, and here we have found you, dear little sister! We may stay two days longer, but after that we must cross the sea to a land which is

beautiful indeed, but not our fatherland. How can we take you with us? We have neither ship nor boat."

"And how shall I deliver you?" said the little sister. They talked together nearly the whole night; only for a very few hours did they sleep.

Elisa awoke at the sound of the swans' wings rustling above her. Her brothers had been changed again, and they wheeled about in wide circles, and at last flew right away; but one of them, the youngest, stayed behind. And the swan laid its head in her lap, and she stroked its white wings; they were together all day. Towards evening the others came back, and when the sun had set they all stood there in their natural shapes.

"To-morrow we must fly from hence, and we must not come back again for a whole year; but we cannot leave you like that. Have you the courage to come with us? My arm is strong enough to carry you through the wood; must not all our wings together be strong enough, then, to carry you right over the sea?"

"Yes, take me with you," said Elisa.

They employed the whole night in weaving a net of supple willow-bark and tough sedges, and it was large and strong. Elisa lay down upon it, and so, when the sun came forth and the brothers were changed into wild swans, they seized the net with their beaks and flew high up towards the clouds with their dear sister, who was still sleeping. The sunbeams fell right upon her face, so one of the swans flew over her head to shade her with its broad wings. They were far away from land when Elisa awoke. She still thought she was dreaming, so strange it seemed to her to be carried aloft in the air right over the sea. By her side lay

a branch covered with lovely ripe berries, and a bundle of savoury roots. These the youngest brother had gathered and placed beside her, and she smiled gratefully upon him, for she knew that it was he who flew above her head and shaded her with his wings. They were so high up that the first ship they saw beneath them looked like a white gull upon the water. A large cloud stood right behind them, a whole mountain it seemed, and upon it Elisa saw the shadows of herself and the eleven swans flying along as large as life; such a splendid picture she had never seen before; but as the sun rose higher and the cloud fell farther back, the floating shadow-picture faded away.

All day long they flew on and on through the air like a whizzing dart, but yet they went slower than usual, for they now had their sister to carry. And now a storm was rising, the evening was drawing nigh; with anguish Elisa saw the sun setting, and still there was nothing to be seen of the lonely sea-bound rock; it seemed to her as if the swans were making stronger strokes with their wings. Alas! hers was the fault that they did not get along more quickly; when the sun had quite set they would become men, fall into the sea, and perish. Then, from the very depths of her heart she sent up a prayer to God, but still she could not see a sign of any rock; the black cloud drew nearer, the strong blast foreboded a storm, the clouds all grouped together into one large threatening mass that stood out against them almost like a wall of lead; the lightning flashes came thick and fast.

And now the sun was on the very verge of the sea. Elisa's heart quaked within her. Then the swans shot down so swiftly that she fancied they were falling; but now they soared onwards

again. The sun was by this time half beneath the water, but now, for the first time, she saw beneath her the little rock, it looked no bigger than a seal that lifts its head above the water. The sun sank so swiftly; now it was a mere tiny star, and the instant her foot touched the solid earth, the sun went out like the last spark on a piece of smouldering paper. Arm in arm she saw her brothers standing around her, but there was just enough room for her and them and no more. The sea smote against the rock and flew in showers above them. The heavens were a sea of flame, and crash upon crash rolled the thunder; but the brothers and the sister held one another's hands and sang a hymn, and their hearts grew strong and blithe.

At dawn the atmosphere was clear and calm, and as soon as the sun arose the swans flew away from the island with Elisa. The sea was still rough. It looked, when they were high up in the air, as if the white foam on the dark green sea was millions of swans floating on the water.

As the sun rose higher, Elisa saw before her, half swimming in the air, a mountain-land with shining masses of ice on the lofty peaks, and amongst them lay a palace, extending for a mile at least, with colonnade upon colonnade piled up in the most daring style; below it palm groves were swaying to and fro, and gorgeous flowers as large as mill-wheels. She asked if this were the land they were going to; but the swans shook their heads, for what she saw was Fata Morgana's beautiful, ever-shifting, cloud-built palace. They dare not take any human being there. Elisa stared at it, and then mountain, wood, and palace all collapsed, and there stood in place of it all twenty proud churches, as like as peas, with high

towers and pointed windows. She thought she heard the organ playing, but it was the sea she heard. And now she was quite close to the churches, when they suddenly became a whole fleet sailing along beneath her; she looked down, and it was only the sea mist driving over the water. Yes, an eternal changing was going on before her eyes, and now at last she saw the land she was really going to. There were the beautiful blue mountains, with the cedar groves, towns, and palaces. Long before the sun went down she was sitting on the mountain in front of a large cave, which was overgrown with fine green creepers which looked like embroidered carpets.

"Now we shall see what you'll dream about to-night," said the youngest brother, and he showed her her bedroom. "Would that I might dream how I could deliver you!" said she; and this thought so vividly occupied her mind that she prayed earnestly to God for His help, nay, even in her sleep she kept on praying; then she seemed to herself to be flying high up in the air to Fata Morgana's palace, and the fairy came to meet her, so fair and shining, and yet she was exactly like the old woman who had given her the berries in the wood, and told her about the swans with the golden crowns.

"Your brothers can be saved," she said; "but have you courage and constancy enough for the task? It is true that the sea is softer than your delicate hands, and yet it transforms the hardest stones; but it does not feel the smart your fingers will feel, it has no heart to suffer all the anguish and pain that you must undergo. Do you see this stinging-nettle I hold in my hand? Many sorts of it grow round about the cave where you sleep; only these, and those

also which grow on the graves in the churchyard, are of any use, mark that! You must pluck these, though they will blister your skin, then heckle the nettles with your feet till you get flax, and this you must twist and knit into eleven padded coats with long sleeves; cast them over the eleven wild swans and the enchantment will be broken. But bear well in mind that from the moment you begin this task until it is quite finished, even if years and years intervene, you must not speak. The first word you utter will go like a mortal dagger through your brothers' hearts. Their life hangs upon your tongue. Mark that, every word of it!" And at the same instant she touched her hand with the nettle; it was like a burning fire, the pain of it awakened Elisa. It was broad day, and close by where she had slept lay a nettle like that she had seen in her dream. Then she fell upon her knees and thanked God, and came out of the cave to begin her work. With her delicate hands she grasped the hideous nettles; they were like fire. They raised big blisters on her hands and arms, but she was quite willing to suffer it, if only she might save her brothers. She heckled every nettle with her naked feet, and began weaving and knitting with the green flax.

With the sunset came the brothers, and they were terrified to find her dumb. They thought at first it was a fresh spell of their wicked stepmother; but when they saw her hands, they understood what she had done for their sakes; and the youngest brother wept, and wherever his tears fell she felt no pain, and the burning blisters disappeared.

All through the night she worked, for she could have no rest till she had delivered her dear brothers. The whole of the following

day, while the swans were away, she sat all alone, but never had time flown away so quickly. One padded coat was already done, and now she began the second. Suddenly, a hunting-horn rang out in the mountains. She was sore afraid. The sound came nearer. She heard the dogs bark. In her terror she crept into the cave, bound together the nettles she had gathered and heckled, and sat upon them. At the same moment a large dog came springing down from the coppice, and immediately afterwards another, and then another, barking loudly, and running backwards and forwards. In a very few minutes all the hunters stood outside the cave, and the handsomest of them all was the King of the land, who came towards Elisa. Never had he seen such a beautiful girl.

"Whence comest thou, beautiful child?" said he. Elisa shook her head, for, of course, she dared not speak; it was as much as her brothers' life and deliverance were worth; and she hid her hands beneath her apron, that the King might not see how much she was obliged to suffer.

"Follow me," said he, "you must not remain here. If you are as good as you are fair, I will clothe you in silk and satin, set a gold crown upon your head, and you shall have your house and home in my richest palace; and so he lifted her upon his horse. She wept, and wrung her hands, but the King said, "I only want to make you happy. The day will come when you will thank me for all this." So he rode off among the mountains, and held her in front of him on the horse, and the huntsmen galloped after.

At sunset the splendid capital with all its churches and cupolas lay before them, and the King led her into the palace, where a great fountain was splashing in a lofty marble hall, where the walls and

ceiling were gorgeous with sculptures; but she had no eyes for these things, but wept and mourned continually, and helplessly let the women put royal robes upon her, plait pearls in her hair, and draw gloves over her blistered hands.

Now when she stood before the King in all her splendour she was so dazzlingly beautiful that the whole Court bowed down before her, and the King chose her for his bride, although the Archbishop shook his head and whispered that the beautiful wood-nymph was certainly a witch who had blinded their eyes and ensnared the King's heart. The King would not listen, but ordered the music to play, the most delicious dishes to be served, and the prettiest girls to dance round her, and she was conducted through fragrant gardens and splendid rooms; yet not a smile crossed her lips or beamed from her eyes, but sorrow stood there as if it were her eternal lot and portion. And now the King opened a little chamber close beside his own where she was to sleep. It was decked with costly green carpets, and was just like the cave where she had been. On the floor lay the bundle of flax she had spun from the nettles, and from the ceiling hung the padded coats that were ready. All this had been picked up by one of the huntsmen as a great curiosity.

"Here you can fancy yourself back in your former home," said the King. "Here is the work which occupied you there. In the midst of all your splendour it will amuse you to think of that time."

When Elisa saw that which lay so near her heart, a smile played round her mouth and the colour came back to her cheeks; she thought of her brothers' deliverance, kissed the King's hand, and he pressed her to his heart, and had all the bells set a-ringing to

announce the bridal feast. The beautiful dumb girl from the woods was to be the Queen of the land.

Then the Archbishop whispered evil words into the King's ear, but they did not reach his heart. The wedding was to hold good, and the Archbishop himself had to place the crown on the Queen's head, and in his evil malice he pressed the narrow circlet right down upon her forehead, so that it hurt her; but a still heavier circlet lay around her heart—sorrow for her brothers. She felt no bodily pain, her mouth was dumb, a single word would surely cost her brothers their lives; but in her eyes lay a deep affection for the good and handsome King who did all he could to please her. She clave to him more and more every day with her whole heart. Oh, if she only dared to confide in him! but dumb she must be—dumb she must accomplish her work. So she slipped away from his side at night, went into the little private chamber which was tricked out like a cave, and she knitted one padded coat after another; but when she came to the seventh she found she had no more flax.

She knew that in the churchyard grew the nettles she had to use, but she had to pluck them herself; and how should she get there? "Oh, what is the smart in my fingers compared with the anguish in my heart!" she thought. "I must venture it. Our Lord will not withdraw His hand from me." With an agony of heart as great as if she were bent upon some evil action, she crept down into the garden on a bright moonlight night, and went through the long alleys and down the lonely paths right away to the churchyard. There she saw a group of Lamias, hideous witches, sitting on one of the broadest gravestones. They took off their rags as if they were going to have a bath, dug up the fresh graves with their long

lean fingers, dragged out the corpses, and ate their flesh. Elisa had to pass close by them, and they fixed their evil eyes upon her; but she said her prayers, gathered the stinging-nettles, and carried them home to the palace.

Only a single person had seen her, the Archbishop, who was astir when other men slept. He had thought that there was something not quite right about the Queen, and now he was sure of it. She was evidently a witch who had befooled the King and all the people. At the shriving stool he told the King what he had seen and what he feared, and as the hard words came from his tongue the carved images of the Saints shook their heads as though they would say, "It is not so: Elisa is innocent!" But the Archbishop interpreted it otherwise, and opined that they witnessed against her, and were shaking their heads at her sin. Then two heavy tears rolled down the King's cheeks, and he went home with doubt in his heart. At night he made as though he slept, but no sweet sleep visited *his* eyes, and he marked how Elisa got up and did the same thing every night, and every time he followed softly behind her, and saw her disappear into her secret chamber.

Day by day his looks grew blacker; Elisa saw it, and could not guess the reason, but it distressed her. And what did she not suffer in her heart for her brothers! Her salt tears ran down the royal purple and velvet, they lay there like sparkling diamonds, and all who saw the splendid garments wished to be Queen. Meanwhile she had all but finished her task, only a single coat still remained to be done, but she had now no more flax, and not a single nettle left. Once more, then, for the very last time, she must go to the churchyard and pluck a few handfuls of nettles. It was an agony to even

think of the lonely journey and the frightful Lamias, but her resolution was as strong as her trust in God.

So Elisa went, but the King and the Archbishop followed after. They saw her vanish through the wicket-gate into the churchyard, and as they approached it they saw the Lamias on the gravestones just as Elisa had seen them, and the King turned away, for he thought she was one of them, she whose head that very evening had rested on his breast. "Let the people judge her," said he; and the people condemned her to be burnt alive.

She was dragged from the splendid palace to a dark and noisome dungeon, where the wind whistled through the barred windows. Instead of her silk and satin they gave her the bundle of nettles she had gathered; she might lay her head on these if she chose. The hard, stinging padded coats she had knitted were to be her pillow and counterpane; but they could have given her nothing more precious, so she set to work again, and prayed earnestly to her God. The street boys outside sang ribald songs about her; not a single soul comforted her with a loving word.

Then, towards evening, swans' wings fluttered close by her dungeon grating. It was the youngest of her brothers; he had discovered his sister, and she sobbed with joy although she knew that the night that had come would doubtless be her last; but, on the other hand, her task was now nearly finished, and her brothers were there.

The Archbishop came to be with her during her last moments —he had promised the King as much—but she shook her head— and her looks and gestures bade him go away; for that night she must finish her work, or else everything, her tears, her woes, her

sleepless nights, would be labour lost. The Archbishop went away, and evil were the words he spoke against her; but poor Elisa knew that she was innocent, and went on with her work.

The tiny mice ran about the floor, they dragged the nettles close to her feet, to help her if ever so little; and the thrush sat down by her window-grating and sang the whole night through as merrily as he could, so that she should not lose heart.

It was just upon dawn, there was still an hour before the wild swans would take to flight, when the eleven brothers stood at the gate of the palace and demanded an audience of the King, but they were told that it could not be yet. Was it not still night? The King was asleep, and none durst wake him. They implored, they threatened, the guards were sent for, nay, at last the King himself came out and asked what it all meant. The same instant the sun rose and no more was to be seen of the brothers, but eleven wild swans flew away over the palace.

Out of the city gates streamed all the people; they were going to see the witch burnt. A broken-down jade dragged the car on which she sat. They had dressed her in a coarse sackcloth smock. Her beautiful long hair hung loosely down over her lovely head, her cheeks were as pale as death; her lips moved softly while her fingers worked away at the green flax; even on the way to death she ceased not from the still unfinished task. Ten of the coats of mail lay at her feet, and the eleventh she was still knitting. The populace cursed her. "Look at the witch!" they cried, "how she mumbles! She hasn't got a hymn-book in her hands; no, not she! She's at her juggling tricks still! Snatch it from her! Tear it to pieces!" But as they pressed upon

her from all sides to tear it to pieces, eleven wild swans came flying along and perched upon the car around her and flapped their large wings. Then the mob fell back in amazement. "It is a sign from Heaven! She is innocent, that's certain!" But they dared not say so aloud.

And now the headsman took her hand, but she hastily cast the eleven coats over the swans, and there stood eleven handsome princes; but the youngest had a swan's wing in place of an arm for his coat was short of a sleeve, which she had been unable to finish in time.

"Now I may speak!" she cried. "I am innocent!"

And the people, when they saw what had happened, bowed down before her as to a saint; but she sank lifeless into her brothers' arms. The suspense, anguish, and pain had been too much for her.

"Yes," said the eldest brother, "she is innocent!" And now he told all that had happened, and while he was speaking, a fragrance as of millions of roses spread abroad, for every faggot in the pile had struck root and shot forth green branches, and there stood a fragrant hedge of red roses, large and lofty, and at the very top of it rested a white and shining flower that sparkled like a star. This flower the King plucked and laid on Elisa's breast, and she awoke with peace and joy in her heart.

Then all the church bells fell a-ringing of their own accord, and the birds all came flying up in large flocks, and there was a bridal procession back to the palace, the like of which never a King had seen before.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

THERE was once a King's son—nobody ever had so many nice books as he. All that had ever happened in this world he could read about or see represented in beautiful pictures. He knew everything about every country and every people; but not a word could he find about where the Garden of Eden lay, and that was just the very place that he thought most about. His grandmother had told him, when he was still very little and just beginning to go to school, that every flower in the Garden of Paradise was the sweetest of cakes, and that their calixes were full of the finest wine; history was written on one of them, geography or tables on another, and you had only to eat these cakes to know your lessons at once. The more you ate, the more you knew of history, geography, and tables. He believed all this at first, but when he grew a bigger boy, learnt more and got ever so much wiser, he understood well enough that the delights of the Garden of Eden must be something very different to that.

"Oh, why did Eve pluck of the tree of knowledge? Why did Adam eat of the forbidden fruit? It ought to have been me, and then it wouldn't have happened! Never would sin have then come

into the world!" He said this once, and he said it again when he was seventeen years old. The Garden of Eden occupied all his thoughts.

One day he went into the woods; he went alone, for it was his greatest joy to go into the woods alone. The evening drew on, the clouds gathered, and the rain fell as if the whole sky was one huge sluice from which the water poured, and it grew as dark as the deepest well at night time. As for the Prince, now he slipped upon the wet grass, now he fell over the rough stones which projected out of the rocky ground. Everything was dripping with water, the poor Prince had not a dry thread on his whole body, he was obliged to crawl over big blocks of stone where the water oozed out of the tall moss. He was just about to give up altogether when he heard a strange whizzing noise, and saw in front of him a large well-lighted cavern. In the middle of it blazed a fire big enough to roast a stag, and, in fact, a stag *was* actually roasting upon it—the stateliest stag with huge antlers was stuck upon a spit revolving between two felled fir-trees. An oldish woman, tall and sturdy, as if she were a man in disguise, sat by the fire, and from time to time cast a faggot into it.

"Pray come closer," said she; "sit down by the fire and get your clothes dried."

"This is a bad look-out," said the Prince, and he sat down on the floor.

"It will be still worse when my sons come home," said the old woman; "you are in the Cavern of the Winds—my sons are the world's four winds. Do you understand that?"

"Where are your sons now?" asked the Prince.

"A silly question deserves no answer!" said the woman. "My sons are away on their own account. They are playing at ball with the clouds in the big room up above there!" and she pointed to the sky.

"Come, come!" said the Prince, "you've rather a rough tongue, and are not nearly so gentle as the ladies I generally see about me."

"Well, they have nothing else to do but be polite; I must be rough if I mean to keep my lads in order. But I can hold my own, though they have got stiff necks. Do you see those four sacks which hang upon the wall? They are afraid of them as you used to be of the bogey behind the mirror. I know how to make them knuckle under, I can tell you, and then into the bag they go. We don't stand upon ceremony. There they have to remain, and don't go gadding about again till I think proper. But here comes one of them already."

It was the North Wind who came in, and brought with him an icy coldness; large hailstones hopped about the floor and snowflakes drifted all about. He was dressed in bearskin breeches and jacket; a sealskin cap fitted close down over his ears; long icicles hung down from his beard, and one hailstone after another glided down the collar of his coat.

"Don't go to the fire all at once!" said the Prince. "The frost might fly to your face and hands and give you chilblains!"

"Frost!"[1] said the North Wind, with a loud laugh, "why that is my greatest delight! But what sort of a jackanapes are

[1] The Danish word *frost* means both frost and chilblain, the pun is necessarily lost in English.

you, I should like to know? How did *you* get into the Cavern of the Winds?"

"He is my guest," said the old woman; "and if you are not satisfied with that explanation, into the bag you go—so, there!"

That was quite enough, so the North Wind now told them whence he had come, and where he had been for the last month or two.

"I have come from the Polar Sea," said he; "I have been over Beeren Island with the Russian whalers. I sat and slept by the helm when they sailed out from the North Cape, but when I was waking up a little, the stormy petrel came knocking about my legs. It is a funny sort of bird, the stormy petrel, for it gives a sharp flap with its wings, and then sticks them out quite straight without moving them, and yet it flies well enough, too."

"Not quite so long-winded, please," said the mother of the Winds. "And so you came to Beeren Island?"

"Yes; and a nice place it is, too. That is a floor for dancing on if you like! As flat as a plate. Half-thawed snow and moss, rough stones and skeletons of whales and Polar bears lie about there, and look like the arms and legs of warriors covered with mould. One would fancy that the sun never shone upon them. I puffed away a little of the mist so that they might see the shanty there. It was a house built of wreckage and covered over with walrus hide, the fleshy side of which was turned outwards and full of green and red stuff; on the roof sat a live Polar bear growling. I went down to the strand, looked at the birds' nests, and peeped at the callow fledglings, who screeched and gabbled at me, so I blew a blast into their thousand throats and taught them to hold their

tongues. Right down below wallowed the whales, like living entrails or prize maggots with pigs' heads and teeth an ell long."

"You tell a tale well, my son," said his mother; "it makes my mouth water to listen to you!"

"So a-hunting we went! The harpoon was hurled into the whale's breast so that the steaming blood-jet gushed over the ice like a fountain. Then I thought I, too, would have a share in the sport, so I blew up a blast and made my swift-clippers, the mountain-high icebergs, hem the boats in. Ho, how the sailors whistled and how they shrieked! but I whistled still higher. They had to unpack the whale's dead body, boxes and cordage and all on the ice. I shook the snowflakes about their ears, and let the imprisoned vessels with their quarry drift southwards to taste salt water there. They will not come to Beeren Island again in a hurry.

"So you have been up to mischief again?" said the mother of the Winds.

"Others may tell of the good I've done," said he. "But here comes my brother from the west. I like him the best of the lot. He smacks of the briny, and brings a delightful coolness along with him."

"Is that little Zephyr?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, it is Zephyr, certainly;" said the old woman, "but he's not so very little after all. Years ago he was a pretty lad, but that is long ago."

He looked like a savage, but he had on a slouched hat so as not to come to grief. He held in his hand a mahogany club cut in

the American mahogany woods. He couldn't have done with a smaller one.

"Whence do you come?" asked his mother.

"From the forest-wildernesses," said he, "where the thorny lianas spread thickets from tree to tree; where the watersnake lies in the wet grass, and men seem out of place."

"What have you been doing there?"

"I was looking at the deep river; I watched it plunge down from the rocks, turn to dust, and fly towards the clouds to make a bridge for the rainbow. I saw the wild buffalo swimming in the flood, but the current tore him away with it; he drifted along with a flock of wild ducks which rose in the air down where the water plunged, but the buffalo had to go with the waterfall; I felt for him, so I blew such a gust that the primeval trees sailed away like shavings."

"And you've done nothing else?" asked the old woman.

"I have turned somersaults in the savannahs, I have raced the wild horse, and shaken down cocoa-nuts. Yes, yes, I've many a tale to tell, but one ought not to tell all one knows. You know that well enough, old mother!" And he embraced her so impetuously that she very nearly tumbled over. He was certainly a very rough lad.

And now the South Wind came in, with a turban and a flying Bedouin mantle.

"It is frightfully cold here!" said he, and threw a log on the fire. "One can see that the North Wind arrived first."

"Why, it's so hot you could roast a Polar bear," said the North Wind.

"You are a Polar bear yourself!" said the South Wind.

"Do you want to be put into that bag?" asked the old woman. "Sit down on that stone there and tell us where you have been."

"In Africa, mother," said he. "I have been hunting lions with the Hottentots in Kaffir-land. What grass grows upon the plains there! 'tis as green as olives. There the gnu danced, and the ostrich ran races with me; but I am still quicker on my pins. I came to the yellow sand of the desert, which looks like the bottom of the sea. I met a caravan. They had just slain their last camel to get water to drink, but it was little enough they got. Above them was the scorching sun, beneath them the singeing sand. The desert extended into boundless space. Then I gambolled about in the fine loose sand and whirled it aloft in huge columns. That *was* a dance, I can tell you! You should have seen how the dromedary crouched before me, and how the merchant drew his caftan over his head. He cast himself down before me as before Allah, his God. Now they all lie buried there. A pyramid of sand marks the spot where they lie. Whenever I blow it away again the sun will bleach their white bones, and travellers will see that men have been there before; else how could one think it possible in the desert?"

"So you, too, have only wrought evil!" said his mother. "Into the bag with you!" And before he was well aware of it, she caught the South Wind round the waist and bundled him into the sack. Round and round about the floor it rolled, but she sat upon it, and then it was obliged to keep still.

"You've got some lively lads there!" observed the Prince.

"Yes, indeed," she replied; "and I can keep them in order, too. But here comes a fourth."

It was the East Wind, and he was dressed like a Chinaman.

"So you come from that quarter, eh?" said his mother. "Why, I thought you had been to the Garden of Eden."

"I don't fly thither till to-morrow," replied the East Wind. "It will be a hundred years to-morrow since I was last there. I now come from China, where I danced round the porcelain tower till all the bells rang again. Down in the street sundry high officials were being flogged. The bamboo cane was slit over their shoulders, and people of the first to the ninth degree too! They shrieked, 'Many thanks, many thanks, my fatherly benefactor!' But they didn't mean anything by it, and I jingled the bells, and sang, 'Tsing, tsang, tsu!'"

"You are full of mischief!" said the old woman. "Well, to-morrow you are off to the Garden of Eden, and that always helps to polish you up a bit. Take a good long draught from the fountain of wisdom, and bring a little bottleful home for me."

"All right!" said the East Wind. "But why have you put my brother from the South in that bag? Out with him! I want him to tell me about the bird Phœnix. The Princess of the Garden of Eden is always wanting to hear about that bird when I pay her a visit every hundred years. Open the bag, my own dear darling mother, and I'll make you a present of two pocketfuls of tea, so fresh and green, which I plucked myself on the spot."

"Well, well, for the sake of the tea, and because you are my pet, I'll open the bag." So she did so, and the South Wind crept

out; but he looked very crestfallen because the strange Prince had seen him put in.

"There's a palm-leaf for the Princess," said the South Wind. "That leaf was given to me by the ancient bird Phœnix, the one solitary Phœnix in the whole world. He scratched his whole biography on it with his beak when he had already lived his hundred years. Now the Princess can read it all herself. I saw the bird Phœnix set himself on fire in his nest and sit and consume away like a Hindoo's widow. How the dried branches crackled! There was smoke and fragrance there, I warrant you! At last it all burst forth into flame, and the ancient bird Phœnix became ashes, but his egg lay red hot in the fire; it burst open with a loud bang, and the fledgling flew out. Now it rules over all the birds, and is the only bird Phœnix in the world. He has pecked a hole in the palm-leaf I gave you. That is his greeting to the Princess."

"And now let us have something to eat," said the mother of the Winds, and so they all sat down to partake of the roasted stag, and the Prince sat by the side of the East Wind, so they soon became very good friends.

"Now, just tell me," said the Prince, "what sort of a Princess is she about whom you have all been talking so much, and where does the Garden of Eden lie?"

"Ho, ho!" said the East Wind. "So you want to go there, eh? Well, fly thither with me to-morrow. But let me tell you one thing. Nobody has ever been there since Adam and Eve's time. You know about them, at any rate, from your Bible history, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said the Prince.

"When they were driven out, the Garden of Eden sank down into the earth, but it still keeps its warm sunshine, its mild air, and all its glory. The Queen of the Fairies dwells there now. There, too, lie the Fortunate Islands, where death never comes, and where it is so pleasant to be. Sit upon my back to-morrow, and I'll take you with me. I think I can manage it for you. But now, don't chatter any more, for I want to go to sleep."

And so they all went to sleep.

In the early morning the Prince awoke, and was not a little startled to find himself already high up among the clouds. He was sitting upon the back of the East Wind, who was civil enough to hold him tight besides. They were so high up in the air that woods and plains, rivers and lakes had the appearance of a very clearly printed chart that shows everything.

"Good morning!" said the East Wind; "you might just as well take another little nap if you like, for there's not much to look at on the flat land below us. Unless, of course, you like to count the churches which stand out like chalk-pricks on the green board." By "the green board," he of course meant the fields and plains.

"It was very rude of me not to say good-bye to your mother and brothers," said the Prince.

"When one's asleep one's excused," said the East Wind, and with that they flew along at a still swifter pace. They could tell it was so from the tops of the woods, for all the branches and leaves rustled as they rushed past; they could tell it from the seas and lakes, for where they flew, the waves rolled higher, and the big ships ducked down in the water like swimming swans. Towards evening, when it grew dark, the big towns looked so strange. The

lights below twinkled now here, now there, just as when one burns a piece of paper black and watches the many little fiery sparks flitting about it like little boys coming from school. And the Prince clapped his hands; but the East Wind told him to be careful and hold tight, as otherwise he might so easily tumble down, and remain hanging on a church spire.

The eagle in the dark woods flew along so nimbly, but the East Wind flew more nimbly still. The Cossack on his little nag sped swiftly over the steppes, but the Prince sped along like the wind.

"Now you can see the Himalayas," said the East Wind, "they are the loftiest mountains in Asia; we shall soon be at the Garden of Eden now!" Then they turned more southwardly, and presently there was an odour of sweet herbs and flowers. The fig and pomegranate grew wild there, and the wild vine had blue and red grapes. Here they both stopped short and stretched themselves in the soft grass, where the flowers nodded in the breeze as if they would say, "Welcome back again!"

"Are we in the Garden of Eden now?" asked the Prince.

"No, indeed," replied the East Wind, "but we soon shall be. Do you see the mountain path over there, and the large cavern where the vine tendrils hang down like large green curtains? We must go through there. Wrap yourself well in your cape, for though the sun scorches just here, yet a step farther on it is icy cold. The bird that hovers about this cave has one wing out here in the summer heat, and the other in there in the winter's cold."

"So this is the way to the Garden of Eden!" said the Prince.

And now they entered the cavern. Oh, how icy cold it was!

but it did not last long. The East Wind stretched out his wings, and they gleamed like sparkling embers. And what a cavern it was! The large blocks of stone, down which the water trickled, hung over them in the strangest shapes. At one time it was so narrow there that they had to creep on their hands and feet, and at another it was as vast and lofty as the open air. It looked like a lot of mortuary-chapels with mute organ-pipes and petrified banners.

"We must be going to the Garden of Eden through the Valley of Death!" said the Prince, and the East Wind answered never a word, but pointed onwards, and there the loveliest blue light was streaming towards them. The stone blocks up above became more and more like vapour, which grew at last as bright as a white cloud in the moonshine. They were now in the softest, sweetest atmosphere, as fresh as the air of the mountains, as fragrant as the roses of the valley.

And there flowed a river as clear as the air itself, and its fishes were like gold and silver. Purple eels, which shot forth blue sparks at every turn, sported within the water, and the broad leaves of the water-lilies had the hues of the rainbow. The lilies themselves were ruddy-yellow, burning flames which the water nourished just as oil keeps a lamp burning. A bridge of marble, solid indeed, but so cunningly and delicately wrought that it seemed made of nothing but lace and beads, led over the water to the Fortunate Islands, where the Garden of Eden bloomed. The East Wind took the Prince in his arms and carried him across. There the leaves and the flowers sang the loveliest songs of his childhood, but in sweetly swelling tones such as no human voice can sing. Were they palm-trees, or gigantic water-plants that grew there? Such large and

luxuriant trees the Prince had never seen before. The most wondrous creeping plants, such as are only to be found wrought with gold and beautiful colours on the margins of saintly old books, or wreathed about the initial letters, hung there in long festoons. It was the most curious combination of birds and flowers and arabesques. In the grass, close beside them, stood a flock of peacocks, with outspread glittering necks—yes, there they were, there was no doubt about it. Yet, when the Prince came to touch them, he perceived that they were not animals at all, but plants. The big dock-leaves here gleamed just like the lovely neck of the peacock. Lions and tigers sprang about like supple cats among the green hedges, where the olive-tree flowers perfumed the air, and these lions and tigers were quite tame. The wild dove, which gleamed like the loveliest pearls, flapped the lion's mane with its wings; and the antelope, generally so timid, stood by and nodded its head as if it also would fain have a share in the sport.

And now the Fairy of Eden came up. Her garments shone like the sun, and her face was as gentle as the face of a happy mother when she rejoices over her child. She was so young and pretty; and the loveliest maidens, each one with a shining star in her hair, followed in her train. The East Wind gave her the leaf on which the bird Phœnix had written, and her eyes sparkled with joy. She took the Prince by the hand and led him into her palace, where the walls had colours like the most gorgeous tulip-leaves when held against the sun. The whole ceiling was one huge dazzling flower, and the more one stared at it, the deeper seemed its calyx. The Prince stepped to the window, and, looking through one of the panes, perceived the tree of knowledge, with the Serpent,

and Adam and Eve, standing close beside it. "What! are they not driven away after all?" he asked. And the Fairy smiled, and explained to him that time had in this way burnt its image on every pane, but those images were not like the pictures that men see. No, there was life in them—the leaves of the trees moved, and men came and went, as in a mirror. Then he looked through another pane, and there was Jacob's dream, with the ladder which went straight up into Heaven, and angels with large wings swept up and down it. Yes, everything which had happened in this world lived and moved in these panes of glass; such works of art only time could engrave.

The Fairy smiled and led him into a large and lofty room, the walls of which seemed to be transparent pictures, and every face seemed lovelier than every other. Millions of happy beings were there, who laughed and sang so that it all flowed together into one melody; the topmost ones were so small that they seemed less than the smallest rosebud when it is painted like a tiny point. And in the midst of the room stood a large tree with luxuriant, hanging branches; golden apples, large and small, hung like oranges among the green leaves. This was the tree of knowledge, of the fruit of which Adam and Eve had eaten. From every leaf dropped a shining red dewdrop; 'twas as if the tree wept tears of blood.

"Let us now get into the boat," said the Fairy; "and there we'll have refreshments on the heaving billows. The boat rocks, but does not move from the spot, yet all the kingdoms of the world glide past before our eyes." And a strange sight it was. Now the whole of the coast began to move. First came the lofty snow-capped Alps with their clouds and dark fir-trees, the horns sounded

deep and sad, and the herdsmen yodled sweetly in the valleys. Then the banana-trees bowed their long hanging branches over the boat; coal-black swans swam upon the water, and the strangest beasts and flowers appeared on the banks. It was New Holland, the fifth Continent, which glided by with a distant prospect of the Blue Mountains. One heard the songs of the priests, and saw the savages dance to the sound of bones and tom-toms. The Pyramids of Egypt towering into the skies, overturned pillars, and sphinxes half-buried in the sand, all sailed by. The Aurora Borealis gleamed above the northern glaciers; no fireworks could come up to that. The Prince was so happy—yes, and he saw a hundredfold more than we can tell about here.

"And can I remain here always?"

"That depends upon yourself," replied the Fairy. "If you do not let yourself be tempted like Adam to do what is forbidden, you may remain here always."

"I am not to touch the apples on the tree of knowledge?" said the Prince. "Why should I, when there are here a thousand other fruits as beautiful as they?"

"Well, try your strength, and if the trial be too strong for you, return with the East Wind who brought you. He is now going to fly back, and will return again in a hundred years. In this place that time will seem no more than a hundred hours to you; but it is long enough for temptation and sin. Every evening when I depart from you, I must call to you, 'Follow me!' I must beckon with my hand to you, but keep back. Do not follow, for with every step you take your desire will grow stronger; you will enter the room where the tree of knowledge grows, and I sleep

beneath its fragrant, hanging branches; you will bend over me, and I am bound to smile upon you; but if you press a kiss upon my mouth, Eden will sink deep into the earth, and you are lost. The keen wind of the desert will howl around you, the cold rain will drip from your hair, and sorrow and affliction will be your portion."

"Here I remain," said the Prince; and the East Wind kissed him on the forehead and said, "Be strong, and we will meet together here again in a hundred years' time. Farewell, farewell!" And the East Wind spread abroad his huge wings; they shone like the harvest moon in the autumn, or like the Aurora Borealis in the cold winter time. "Farewell, farewell!" resounded from flowers and trees, and whole strings of storks and pelicans, like fluttering ribbons, accompanied him to the boundaries of the garden.

"Now let us begin our dance," said the Fairy. "Whenever I dance with you, and the dance is drawing to a close, and the sun is setting, you will see me beckon to you, you will hear me cry, 'Follow me!' But do not. Every evening of the hundred years I must repeat it; every time the dance is over you will gain more strength, till at last you will think nothing at all of the ordeal. This evening is the first time. I have warned you, remember!"

And the Fairy led him into a large room of white transparent lilies, the yellow petals in every one of them was a little gold harp which sounded like stringed instruments and wind instruments in one. The loveliest girls, so supple and slim, clothed in wavy gauze, weaved the light dance, and sang of the joys of life. The Garden of Eden, they sang, would bloom for ever, and they should never die.

And the sun went down, the whole sky became a piece of gold which gave the lilies tints like the loveliest rose, and the Prince drank of the foaming wine the girls presented him with, and he felt a bliss he had never felt before; he saw how the background of the room opened, and the tree of knowledge stood there in a splendour which dazzled his eyes; and from it came a song as soft and sweet as the voice of his mother, and it was as though she sang, "My child, my darling child!" Then the Fairy beckoned and cried so tenderly, "Follow me! follow me!" and he rushed towards her, forgot his promise, forgot it all the very first evening, and she beckoned and smiled. The fragrance, the spiced fragrance all about grew stronger and stronger, the harps sounded far lovelier, and it was as though millions of smiling heads in the room where the tree grew nodded and sang, "One ought to know all things! Man is the lord of the earth!" And it was no longer tears of blood which fell from the leaves of the tree of knowledge, it was red sparkling stars, he thought. "Follow me! follow me!" cried the quivering tones, and at every step the Prince's cheeks burned more hotly, his blood flowed more quickly. "I must!" said he. "Why, it's no sin! How can it be? Why should I not follow after joy and beauty? I want to see her asleep! Why, surely nothing's lost if I only take care not to kiss her! And that I'll not do—I am strong, I have a firm will!"

And the Fairy cast off her shining raiment, bent back the branches, and a moment afterwards she was concealed within them.

"I haven't sinned yet," said the Prince, "and, what is more, I don't mean to!" and he drew the branches apart. There she was

sleeping already, lovely as only the Fairy of the Garden of Eden can be. She was smiling in her dreams; he bent down over her and saw the tears trembling upon her eyelashes.

"Art thou weeping for me?" he whispered. "Weep not, lovely woman! Now, for the first time, I comprehend the bliss of Paradise; it streams through my blood, through my very thoughts, and I feel life eternal in my earthly body. What if eternal night be my portion—one moment like this is wealth enough for me!" and he kissed away the tears from her eyes, and his mouth touched hers.

Then sounded a peal of thunder, deeper and more terrible than any one has ever heard, and everything collapsed. The beautiful Fairy vanished, and Paradise with all its flowers sank deep, deep down—the Prince saw it sink down into black night; far, far away it shone like a tiny twinkling star. The chill of death shivered through all his limbs, he closed his eyes, and lay for a long time as one who is dead.

The cold rain fell upon his face, the keen blast blew about his head, and then his thoughts came back to him. "What have I done?" he sighed. "I have sinned like Adam! Sinned so that Paradise has sunk deep down!" and he opened his eyes. The star far away, the star which sparkled like the sunken Paradise, he still saw it—it was the morning star shining in the sky. He rose up and found himself by the Cavern of the Winds, and the Mother of the Winds was sitting by his side; she looked angry, and raised her arm in the air.

"The very first evening, too!" she said. "I thought as much! If you were my boy, into that sack you should go this instant!"

"And thither he *shall* go!" said Death. 'Twas a grim old man that spoke, scythe in hand, with large black wings. "He shall be laid in a coffin, but not just yet. I have set my mark upon him, that's all. Let him wander about on the earth a little while longer, atone for his sin and grow good and better. I shall come one day! When he least expects it, I shall put him in his coffin, place it on my head, and fly away to the stars. There, also, blooms the Garden of Eden, and if he is good he shall enter therein; but if his thoughts be evil, and his heart still full of sin, he shall sink with his coffin deeper than ever Paradise sank, and only once every thousand years will I fetch him again, that he may sink still deeper, or abide in the star, the star that shines above."

THE FLYING TRUNK.[1]

THERE was once a merchant who was so rich that he could have paved the whole street (and a little lane thrown in besides) with silver pieces, but he didn't, for he had other things to do with his money. He made a shilling out of every farthing he invested (that's the sort of merchant *he* was!), and then he died.

His son now got all this money and he lived right merrily, went to fancy balls every night, made paper kites out of bank-notes, and played at ducks and drakes over the water with gold pieces instead of stones, so that his money had leave to go, and go it did, till at last he had nothing in the world but four farthings, a pair of slippers, and an old dressing-gown. Now that he was not fit to be seen in the street with them, his friends washed their hands of him altogether; but one of them, who was kind, sent him an old trunk, and said "Pack up!" which was certainly very good advice, but as he had nothing at all to pack up he sat down on the trunk instead.

[1] The idea of this story is borrowed from the *Arabian Nights*.

It was a comical trunk. You had only to press the lock and the trunk set off flying. It did so now. Whisk! up the chimney it flew with him, high above the clouds, further and further away; it creaked frightfully inside and he was so terrified lest it should go to pieces altogether, in which case he would have turned quite a pretty summersault; but at last he got to the land of the Turks. He hid the trunk in a wood beneath the withered leaves and then went into the town; there was nothing to prevent him doing that, for among the Turks everybody went about in dressing-gowns and slippers just like him. So he met a nurse with a little child. "Listen, thou Turkish nurse!" said he, "what is that large castle close to the town with the windows all so high?"

"That is where the King's daughter dwells!" said she; "it has been foretold to her that she will have great trouble about a lover, and so no wooer is allowed to approach her unless the King and Queen come too."

"Thank you!" said the merchant's son; and he went back to the wood, sat down on the trunk, flew upon the roof of the castle, and crept through the Princess's window.

She lay upon the sofa asleep, and was so pretty that the merchant's son kissed her, he really could not help it. She awoke and was quite frightened, but he said he was the God of the Turks who had come through the air to her, and she rather seemed to like it. So they sat there side by side and he told her tales about her eyes; they were the loveliest eyes and thoughts like mermaids swam about in them; and he made up tales about her brow; it was a snow mountain with the loveliest

rooms and pictures; and he told her about the stork who brings the sweet little children. Yes, indeed, very pretty tales they were, so he wooed the Princess and she said "Yes," immediately. "But," she added, "you must come here on Saturday when the King and Queen are here to tea; they will be very proud for me to have a Turkish god for my husband. But see that you have a really lovely tale ready, for that is what my parents are particularly fond of; my mother likes *her* stories moral and refined, while my father likes them rollicking—things that make one laugh, you know!"

"Very well, the only bridal gift I'll bring will be a nice tale!" said he, and so they parted; but the Princess gave him a sabre set with gold pieces: it was just what he wanted and he could turn it to good account.

So he flew away, bought himself a new dressing-gown, and then sat down in the wood and began composing a tale; it was to be ready by Saturday, and it is not so easy to compose that sort of thing to order. But he was ready with it at last, and by that time it was Saturday. The King, Queen, and the whole Court were having tea with the Princess, and they were all awaiting him. He was received so nicely!

"And now will you tell us a tale?" said the Queen, "one that is profound and improving!"

"But which will make one laugh as well!" said the King.

"Oh, certainly!" said he; and so he told them what you must now listen to with all your might.

"There was once a bundle of matches who were extraordinarily proud because they were of high lineage; their an-

cestral tree—that is to say, the great fir-tree, of which each one of them was a little splinter—had been a huge old tree in the forest. The matches now lay upon the shelf between a tinder-box and an old iron pot, and to these they told the tale of their youth. 'Yes, when we were on the green branch,' said they, then we were indeed in clover! Every morning and evening

diamond tea, that is to say, dew. Sunshine all day long when the sun shone, and all the little birds to tell us stories. We could see very well that we, too, were rich, for the leaf trees [1] were only dressed up in summer, but our family had the right to wear clothes both summer and winter. But then came the wood-cutters, that was the great revolution, and our family was

[1] All trees except the pine and fir species.

felled to the ground. The head of the family got a place as main-mast on board a splendid ship, which could sail round the world if it liked; the other branches went elsewhere, and our mission now is to light candles for the common people —that is why we distinguished people have come down to the kitchen.'

"'Well, things are very different with me!' said the iron pot, by the side of which lay the matches, 'ever since I came out in the world I have been scoured and boiled many and many a time. I look to solidity, and, properly speaking, am the first person in the house. My only joy is to lie neat and clean after dinner on the shelf and have a sensible chat with my comrades; but if I except the pail, which occasionally goes down into the garden, we always live indoors. Our only newsmonger is the market-basket, and it is talking incessantly about the Government and the people; yes, last year there was an old pot with us who was so terrified thereby that it fell down and dashed itself to pieces. That market-basket is quite a radical, I can tell you!'

"'You chatter too much, you do!' said the tinder-box, and the steel struck the flint stone till it regularly sparkled. 'Shall we have a cheerful afternoon now?'

"'Yes, let us talk about who is the most fashionable,' said the matches.

"'No, I don't like talking about myself,' said the pewter pot. "'Let us have an evening entertainment. I'll begin. I'll tell about something which every one has experienced; one can imagine one's self in similar circumstances, and that is such capital fun. "By the East Sea, where the Danish beeches grow—"'

"'That is a nice beginning,' said all the plates, 'we know we shall like that story.'

"'Yes, there I passed the days of my youth in a quiet family; the furniture was waxed, the floor washed, and we had clean curtains every fortnight.'

"'How interesting you do make it!' said the hearth-broom. 'One can hear at once that it is a lady who tells the tale; a vein of such refinement runs right through it all.'

"'Yes, one does feel that!' said the pail, and it took a little skip for pure joy, so that the floor regularly creaked.

"And so the pot continued its story, and the end was as good as the beginning.

"And the plates rattled for joy, and the hearth-brush took some green parsley from the sand-box and crowned the pot, for it knew that that would irritate the others, 'And if I crown her to-day,' it thought, 'she will crown me to-morrow.'

"'Now I'll dance,' said the fire-tongs, and dance it did. Heaven help us! how it flung its legs into the air! the old chair-cover in the corner regularly split its sides at the sight. 'Let me be crowned too!' said the fire-tongs, and crowned she was.

"'A low lot, a low lot after all!' thought the matches.

"And now the tea-pot was asked to sing, but she protested she had a cold and could only sing when she was boiling over, but this was pure affectation; it would not sing except it was on the table with the family.

"Right in the window-sill stood an old quill-pen which the maid-servant used to write with; there was nothing remarkable about it except that it had been dipped a little too deeply into

the ink-pot, but of that it was quite proud. 'If the tea-pot won't sing,' it said, 'she may leave it alone. Outside there is a nightingale hanging in its cage, it can sing if you like. It is true it hasn't *learnt* anything, but we won't speak ill of it this evening.'

"'I consider it highly unbecoming that such a foreign bird should be listened to at all,' said the tea-kettle, who was the kitchen-songtress and half-sister of the tea-pot. 'Is it patriotic? That's what I want to know! Let the market-basket decide.'

"'All I know is that I am very angry!' said the market-basket; 'nobody can imagine how angry I am! Is this a proper way of passing the evening I ask? Would it not be much better to put our household to rights first of all? Every one would then get his proper place, and I should rule the whole roast. Things would be something very different then!'

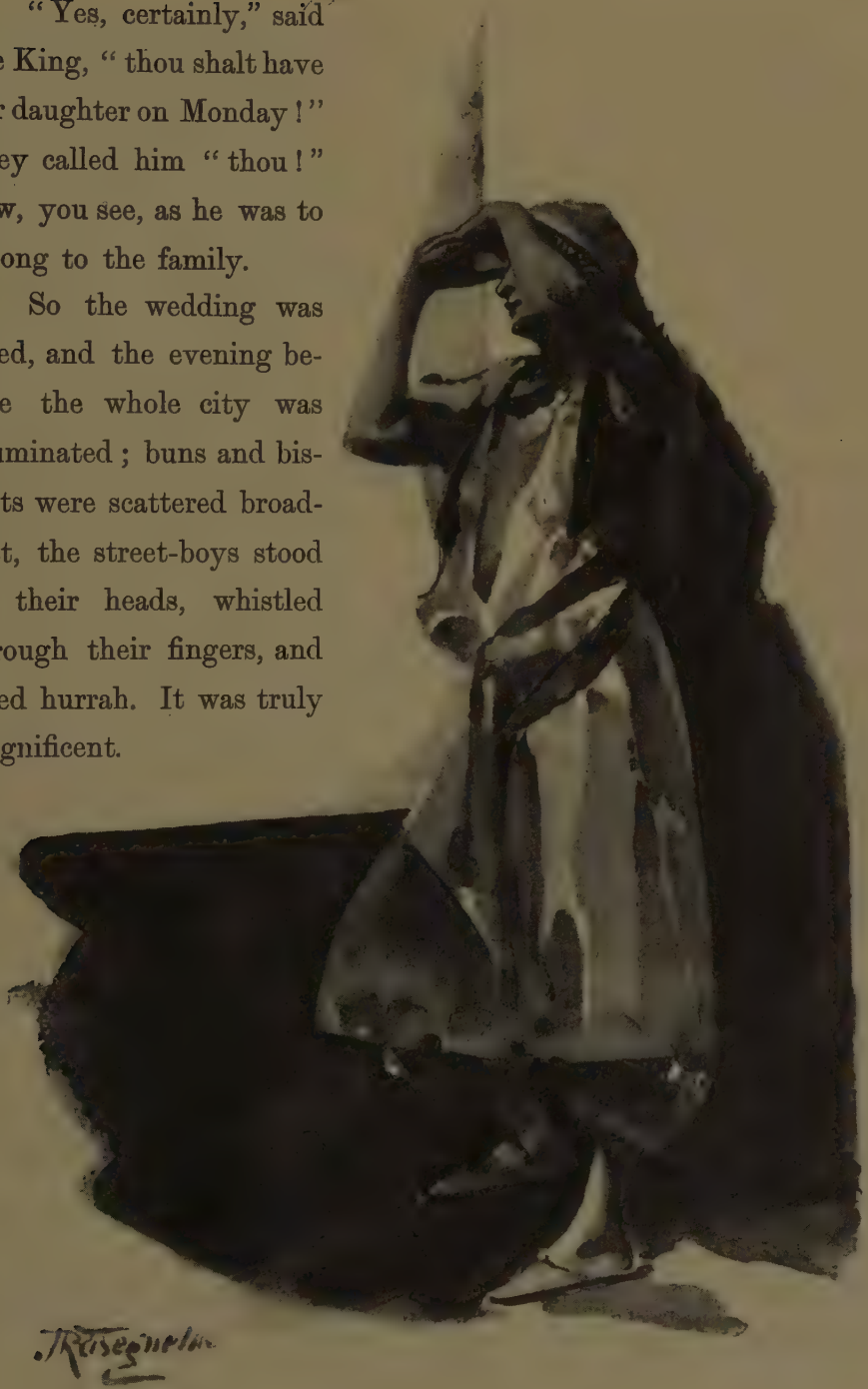
"'Yes, let us kick up a row!' said they all. The same instant the door opened. It was the maid-servant, and they immediately stood stock-still, no one uttered a sound; but there was not a pot there which did not know very well what it could do and how distinguished it really was. 'Yes, if only I had liked,' thought each one of them, 'what a rollicking afternoon we should have had!'

"The maid-servant took the matches and struck a light with them, how they spluttered and burst into flame, to be sure! 'Now every one can see,' thought they, 'that we stand first of all! What light, what splendour is ours!' and so they burned right out."

"That was a beautiful story!" said the Queen. "I so entered into the feelings of the matches in the kitchen. Yes, now thou shalt have our daughter!"

"Yes, certainly," said the King, "thou shalt have our daughter on Monday!" They called him "thou!" now, you see, as he was to belong to the family.

So the wedding was fixed, and the evening before the whole city was illuminated; buns and biscuits were scattered broadcast, the street-boys stood on their heads, whistled through their fingers, and cried hurrah. It was truly magnificent.



"Yes, and I must take good care to do something likewise!" thought the merchant's son, and so he bought rockets, crackers, and every sort of firework you can think of, put them in his trunk and then flew up into the air. Rutch! how they went off and how they fizzed! The Turks all skipped into the air at the sight, so that their slippers flew about their ears; such a shower of meteors they had never seen before. Now they could well understand that it was the god of the Turks himself who was to have the Princess.

As soon as the merchant's son had got back into the wood with his trunk he thought: "I will just go into the town to hear how the affair went off!" And it was only reasonable that he should wish to do so.

How folks did talk, to be sure! Every blessed one whom he asked about it had seen it in his own way, but they had one and all thought it charming.

"I saw the god of the Turks himself," said one; "he had eyes like shining stars and a beard like foaming water."

"He flew in a fiery mantle," said another; "the loveliest little angels peeped forth from the folds of it."

Yes, he heard the most beautiful things about himself, and the day after he was to be married. And now he went back to the wood to set himself on his trunk—but where was it? The trunk was burnt up. A spark from the fireworks had remained in it, it had caught fire, and the trunk was nothing but ashes. He could fly no more, he could not get at his bride. She stood all day on the roof and waited; she is still waiting; but he goes round about the world and tells stories, but they are no longer as merry as the story he told about the matches.

THE GIRL WHO TROD ON A LOAF.[1]

I DARE SAY you have heard of the girl who trod upon the loaf so as not to soil her shoes, and how ill it fared with her. 'Tis both written and printed.

She was a poor girl, proud and stuck up; there was a vicious strain in her, as people say. When quite a little thing, it was her greatest delight to catch hold of flies, pull their wings off, and thus make creeping things of them. She took cockchafers and beetles, stuck them on a pin, and then placed a green leaf or a little bit of paper on the top of their feet, and the poor creatures held fast on to it and twisted and turned it to try and get off the pin.

"Look! the cockchafer is reading!" said little Inger; "see how it turns the leaf over!"

As she grew up she grew rather worse than better, but she was pretty, and that was the ruin of her, for otherwise she would have been slapped and thumped into something like good behaviour.

[1] This was one of the stories which Andersen first heard in his childhood, though, as now told by him, it is more merciful to the young sinner who is the heroine.

"You need a strong hand over you!" said her own mother; "while quite a child you often trod upon my apron. I fear that when you grow older you will often tread upon my heart."

And sure enough she did.

And now she went to the country to take service with gentlefolks; they treated her just as if she was their own child, and as such she was dressed; very well she looked too, and so her pride increased.

She had been with them a year when her mistress said to her: "You ought to go and see your parents now and then, little Inger!"

So she went, but only to show herself off; they should see what a fine lady she had grown; but when she came to the outskirts of the little town and saw the girls and the young fellows romping about by the pond, and her own mother actually sitting down on a stone and resting with a bundle of firewood in her lap which she had gathered in the wood, then indeed Inger turned round again, she was ashamed that she who was so finely dressed should have such a ragged old thing for a mother who went out to pick up sticks. She did not reproach herself a bit for turning back, she was quite offended.

And now another six months passed by.

"You should go home and see your old parents now and then, little Inger!" said her mistress; "there's a large wheaten loaf for you, you can take it with you; they'll be quite glad to see you."

And Inger put on all her finery and her new shoes, and she lifted her skirts and tripped so gingerly so as to be nice

and clean about the feet, and she cannot be blamed for that of course; but when she came to where the path crossed a fen and there was mud and water for a good bit of the way, she threw the bread into the mud so as to tread upon it and come dryshod over; but as she stood with one foot on the loaf and the other in the air, the loaf sank down with her deeper and deeper, she disappeared entirely, and a black bubbling puddle was all that was to be seen.

That's the story!

But what became of her? Well, she went down to the Marsh Woman who is always brewing. The Marsh Woman is the aunt of the elves on the father's side. These elves are very well known; songs are written about them and they are painted in pictures, but all that people know of the Marsh Woman is that when the meadows are steaming, in the summer time, it is really the Marsh Woman who is brewing. Down into her brewery it was that Inger sank, and it is a place where one can't hold out very long. A cesspool is a brilliant state-chamber compared with the Marsh Woman's brewery. Every vat there smells enough to make men faint, and these vats all stand squeezed close up to one another, and if there is anywhere a little gap between them where one might squeeze through, one can't do it because of the wet toads and fat snakes which are all entangled together there; thither did little Inger sink down; and all the nasty living mud there was so icy cold that she shivered in all her limbs, nay, she stiffened more and more. The loaf hung fast on to her and drew her down just as a knob of amber draws down a bit of straw.

The Marsh Woman was at home, the brewery was to be inspected that day by the devil and his great-grandmother, and the devil's great grandmother is a very venomous old woman who is never idle; she never goes out without taking her knitting with her, and she had it with her now. She sewed together bits of itching leather to put in people's boots, and then they know no rest; she embroidered lies and cross-stitched rash words, which fell to the earth to the ruin and damage of all who came across them. Yes, that old great-grandmother can sew, embroider, and cross-stitch, I can tell you!

She saw Inger, put her eye-glass to her eye, and then looked at her again. "That's a girl with talent!" said she. "I beg you to give her to me as a souvenir of my visit here! She will do very well as a pedestal in the ante-chamber of my great great grandchild!"

And she got her; and so little Inger came to hell. Folks don't always get there straightway, but they may get there by a roundabout way if they have talent in that direction.

It was an ante-chamber to infinity; one got quite giddy if one looked forward, and quite giddy also if one looked backward there, and a whole swarm of despairing creatures stood here waiting for the door of grace to be opened to them. They might wait here a long time too! large, fat, waddling spiders span their thousand-year webs over their feet, and these webs clutched like footscrews and gripped like copper links; and besides that there was an eternal unrest in every soul there, a tormenting restlessness. The miser stood there and had forgotten the key of his money-chest, and he knew that he had left it in the lock. Yes, it would

take too long to go over all the plagues and torments which were suffered here. It was horrible for Inger to stand there as a pedestal, she was riveted tightly to the loaf from below, as it were.

"And all because one wants to keep one's feet clean!" said she to herself. "Just look how they all glare at me!" Yes, they all looked at her; their evil wishes shone out of their eyes and spoke without words from the corners of their mouths; they were horrible to behold.

"I must be quite nice to look at!" said little Inger; "I have a pretty face and nice clothes!" and she rolled her eyes about; she would have turned her neck too, but it was too stiff for that. Nay, but how dirty she had become in the Marsh Woman's brewery; she had never thought of that! It was just as if she had been drenched through with a huge bucketful of slime; a snake hung in her hair and dangled down her neck, and from every fold of her dress there peeped a toad, which barked like an asthmatic lap-dog. It was very unpleasant. "But all the others down below here look just as dreadful!" said she by way of consoling herself.

Worst of all, however, was the frightful hunger she felt; couldn't she manage then to stoop down and break off a bit of the loaf on which she stood? No, her back was stiff, her arms and hands were stiff, her whole body was like a stone statue, her eyes were the only things she could turn in her head, but she could turn them right round so that she could look out of the back of her head, and a hideous sight it was. And then the flies came. They crept right over her eyes both backwards and forwards, she

blinked with her eyes, but the flies didn't fly away, for they couldn't, their wings had been pulled off, they had become creeping things; that *was* a torment, and the dreadful hunger was added to it, nay, at last, it seemed to her as if she were being burnt up, and she became so empty inside, so frightfully empty.

"If it lasts much longer I shall not be able to bear it!" said she; but she had to bear it, and still it lasted and went on lasting.

Then a burning tear fell down upon her head, it trickled over her face and breast right down to the loaf, there fell another tear, there fell many more. Who was it that wept over little Inger? Had she not a mother upon the earth? The tears of sorrow which a mother weeps over her child always reach it, but they do not loosen, they burn and only make the torment greater. And now this unendurable hunger, and not to be able to get at the loaf she was treading under foot! At last she had a feeling that everything inside her must have eaten itself up ,she was like a thin, hollow reed which drew every sound into it; she heard quite plainly everything on earth concerning her, and all she heard was hard and evil. Her mother, sure enough, wept woeful bitter tears, but she said at the same time: "Pride goes before a fall! Pride was your ruin, Inger! Ah! how you have grieved your mother!"

Her mother and all the folks up there knew about her sin, knew that she had trod on the loaf, sunk through the ground and disappeared. The cowherd told them about it; he had seen it himself from the slope.

"How you have grieved your mother, Inger!" said her mother. "I thought it would end like this!"

"Would that I had never been born," thought Inger; "it would have been much better for me! It is of no use of mother to whine about it now!"

And she heard how those good and honest folks, her master and mistress, who had been like second parents to her, now talked about her. "She was a sinful child!" said they; "she had no respect for God's gifts, but trod them under foot. It will be hard for her to get the door of grace opened."

"They should have brought me up better!" thought Inger, "and plucked the crotchets out of my head if I had any!"

She heard how they made up a ballad all about her: "The conceited girl who trod upon the loaf to keep her shoes nice and clean," and it was sung all over the country.

"That one should have to listen to so much and suffer so much for such a trifle as that!" thought Inger. "The others should be punished for their faults in the same way, that's all! There would be a lot to punish then, I know! Ugh! how I am tormented!"

And her heart grew even harder than her shell.

"Down below here one ought not to be better than one's company! And I don't want to be better either. How they do glare!"

And her heart grew wrathful and bitter against all men.

"Now they've something to talk about up there. Ugh! how I am tormented."

And she heard them tell her story to the children, and the

little ones called her "that wicked Inger!"—"She was so horrid," said they, "so nasty! she *ought* to be thoroughly tormented!"

There were always hard words against her in the children's mouths.

Yet one day when wrath and hunger were gnawing away at her hollow shell, and she heard her name mentioned and her story told to an innocent child, a little girl, she heard the little thing burst into tears at the story of vain, conceited Inger.

"But will she never come up again?" asked the little girl; and the answer was, "No, she'll never come up again!"

"But if she begs for forgiveness and says she will never do it any more?"

"But she won't beg for forgiveness," said they.

"Oh, I do so wish she would!" said the little girl, and was quite inconsolable. "I'd give my doll's-house if she would only come up again. It is so dreadful there for poor Inger!"

And the words reached right down to Inger's heart, they really seemed to do her good; it was the first time any one had said "Poor Inger!" and without adding the least bit to her faults. A little innocent child wept and prayed for her, she felt so odd at the thought of it, she would have liked to weep and she couldn't weep, and that was also a torment.

The years passed away up above but there was no change at all down below there, and the sounds from the world above came to her more and more seldom now and she rarely heard her name mentioned. Then, one day, she heard a deep sigh: "Inger! Inger!

how you have grieved me, I knew it would be so!" It was her mother who died.

She heard her name mentioned sometimes by her old master and mistress, and it was her mistress who said the gentlest words of her: "I wonder if I shall ever see you again, Inger! One knows not what will become of one!"

But Inger knew very well that her good and worthy master and mistress could never come where she was.

And so time went on again and a long and bitter time it was, and then Inger again heard her name mentioned, and saw, as it were, two bright stars shining right above her; they were two gentle eyes which were closing to this world. So many years had passed since the time that the little girl had cried inconsolably over "poor Inger," that that child had become an old woman whom God was about to call to Himself, and just at that hour when the sum of our whole life rises up before us in thought, she also remembered how, as a little child, she couldn't help weeping bitterly on hearing the story of Inger; that time and the impression then made upon her stood out so vividly before the old woman at the hour of her death that she cried aloud: "O Lord my God! have I not also then, like Inger, trodden often and often upon the blessings of thy bounty and thought nothing of them? Have I not also gone about with pride in my heart, but Thou of Thy grace hast not let me sink, but held me up! Oh, withdraw not Thy hand from me in this my last hour!"

And the old woman's eyes closed, and the eyes of her soul were opened to the hidden things, and as Inger had lived so vividly in her last thoughts, she saw her now, saw how deeply she had been

dragged down, and at the sight the pious soul burst into tears. She stood in the kingdom of heaven and wept for wretched Inger, just as she had done when a child and her tears, and her prayers resounded like an echo in the hollow empty shell which enclosed the imprisoned, tormented soul, and it was overwhelmed by the love from above surpassing thought and knowledge; an angel of God was weeping over her! Why was such a grace allowed her? The tormented soul collected in thought, as it were, all the deeds it had ever done upon earth, and it quivered in a flood of tears such as Inger never could have wept; she was filled with a sorrow for herself; it seemed to her as if the door of grace could never be opened to her; and the very instant she acknowledged it in deep contrition, a beam of light shone down into the abyss of hell, the beam came with a might stronger than a sunbeam which melts a snow-man raised by the boys in the yard, and thus, far quicker than a snow-flake which falls upon the warm mouth of a child, and melts away into a drop of water, Inger's petrified shape evaporated, and a little bird winged its zig-zag course, up towards the world of mortals, swift as light, but shy and timid it was at all around it; and, as if it were ashamed of itself and fearful of all living creatures, it hastily sought a shelter in a dark hole which it found in a tumble-down wall; there it sat crouching, all of a heap, and quivering in every limb; it could not lift up its voice, for voice it had none. It sat there a long time till it was calm enough to look at and understand the glory outside, for a glory it really was; the air was so fresh and mild, the moon shone so bright, tree and bush gave forth their fragrance; and it was so cosy where it sat, its feathery dress was so pure and fine. Nay, but how all created things were revealed in love and glory! All the thoughts

which stirred within the bird's breast would fain have sung out, but the bird had not the power to sing, though gladly it would have done so, like the cuckoos and the nightingales in spring. God, who hears the noiseless song of praise of the very worm, heard also the song of praise which rose up within this breast.

These voiceless songs of thought grew and swelled as the weeks went on, they must needs burst forth at the first stroke of a good deed, a good deed which must needs be done.

And now holy Yuletide came. The farmer planted a pole hard by the wall, and tied upon it an unthrashed bundle of oats, that the fowls of the air might also have a happy Christmas and a joyful meal in this the Saviour's own time.

And the sun rose up on Christmas morn and shone on the bundle of oats, and all the twittering birds flew round about the pole: and then from the wall also there came a sound of "Pee! Pee!" The swelling thought became a sound, the weak piping was a whole hymn of joy, the thought of a good deed was awakened, and the bird flew out of its hiding-place; you may be sure that in the kingdom of heaven they knew what sort of a bird it was.

Winter began in grim earnest, the waters were frozen deep down, the birds of the air and the beasts of the forest were hard pressed for food. The little bird flew along the highway, and in the track of the sledges it sought and found, here and there, a grain of corn, or a crumb or two at the places where they baited the horses, and it only ate a little of them and went and called all the starving sparrows together that they might find some food here too. It flew about the villages, spied all about, and wherever a friendly

hand had strewn bread at the windows for the birds, it only ate a single little bit itself and gave all the rest to the others.

In the course of the winter the bird had collected and given away so many bread crumbs that, weighed all together, they made up the whole loaf which little Inger had trod upon so as not to soil her shoes, and when the last bread crumb had been found and given away, the bird's gray wings became white and spread out.

"There's a tern flying over the lake!" said the children, who saw the white bird; now it ducked down into the lake, now it rose in the bright sunshine, which shone so that it was impossible to see what had become of it; they said that it had flown right into the sun.

THE STEADFAST TIN SOLDIER.

THERE were once upon a time five-and-twenty tin soldiers, they were all brothers, for they were born of an old tin ladle. They shouldered their muskets, looked straight before them, and their uniform was red and blue, and very nice it looked. The very first thing they heard in this world when the cover was taken off the box in which they lay, were the words, "Tin soldiers!" A little boy said that and clapped his hands; he had got them because it was his birthday, and he now set them out on the table. Every single soldier was the exact image of all the others—at least only one of them was a little different. He had only one leg, for he had been moulded last of all, and there was not tin enough left to give him two legs; yet he stood as firmly on his one leg as the others did on two legs, and it was just this particular soldier who was to become remarkable.

On the table where they were set up stood a lot of other toys, but what struck the eye most was a pretty paper palace. You could see right into the rooms through the little windows. Outside stood small trees round about a little mirror which was

to represent a lake, and swans of wax swam about upon it and mirrored themselves therein. It was all very pretty, but prettiest of all was certainly a little maid who stood in the middle of the open palace door; she also was clipped out of paper, but she had a skirt of the brightest linen, and a tiny narrow blue ribbon right over her shoulder like a piece of drapery, and in the middle of it stood a glistening spangle as large as her whole face. The little maid stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancing girl, and then she lifted one of her legs so high in the air that the tin soldier absolutely could not make out what had become of it, and fancied that she had only one leg like him.

"That's the wife for me!" thought he; "but she's a swell, she lives in a palace, I have only a box to live in, and there are five-and-twenty of us there, so it is not the place for her! Still I'll try and make her acquaintance!" So he laid him down at full length behind a snuff box which happened to be on the table; from whence he could have a good look at the nice little lady who kept on standing on one leg without losing her balance.

When it was evening all the other tin soldiers were put into their box, and the people of the house went to bed. And now the toys began to play among themselves; they played at visitors, at warfare, and they had a ball. The tin soldiers rattled in the box, for they wanted to join in the sport, but they could not lift the lid off. The nut-crackers turned somersaults, and the slate-pencil cast up accounts on the slate. There was such a racket that the canary awoke and began to pipe, and in verse too! The only two who did not move from the spot were the tin soldier and the little dancing girl. She remained erect on the tips of

her toes with both arms stretched wide out; he was just as steadfast on his one leg, and never took his eyes off her for an instant.

And now it struck twelve o'clock, and crack! the lid of the snuff-box flew open, but there was no snuff in it, no, only a little black gnome; it was quite a work of art.

"Tin soldier," cried the gnome, "will you keep your eyes to yourself?"

But the tin soldier pretended he didn't hear.

"Stop till morning, that's all!" said the gnome.

Now when it was morning and the children came up to the nursery the tin soldier was close to the window, and whether it was the gnome or a draught of air I don't know, but at any rate the window all at once flew open, and the soldier was pitched out, head over heels, from the third story. It was a frightful flight, he turned his one leg right up into the air, and remained standing on his helmet with his bayonet sticking in between the flagstones.

The maid-servant and the little boy immediately came down stairs to look for him, but though they very nearly trod upon him they could not see him. If the tin soldier had cried out: "Here am I!" they certainly would have found him, but this he did not consider it right and proper to do, because he was in uniform. And now it began to rain; the drops fell thicker and thicker, it regularly poured. When it was over two street-boys came along that way. "Look!" cried one of them, "there's a tin soldier, let's give him a sail!" So they made a boat out of a piece of newspaper, put the tin soldier in the middle of it, and down the gutter he went sailing, and both boys ran along by the side

of it and clapped their hands. Heaven help us! what billows there were in that gutter, and the current too! it was dreadful! Yes! it had poured in torrents, and no mistake! The paper boat rocked up and down and turned round and round till the tin soldier was quite dizzy; but he remained steadfast all through it, never changed countenance, looked straight before him, and shouldered arms. All at once the boat went right under a long gutter-coping; it grew as dark as if he were in his box. "Where on earth am I going now!" thought he; "yes, it is all the gnome's fault. Ah! if only that little maid were sitting here in the boat it might be as dark again if it liked!" The same instant up came a large water rat who lived under the gutter-coping.

"Have you a passport?" asked the rat. "Come! out with your passport!"

But the tin soldier kept silence and shouldered arms still more firmly. Off went the boat with the rat close behind it. Ugh! how it gnashed its teeth and cried "Stop him! stop him! He hasn't paid his toll! He hasn't shown his passport!" But the stream grew stronger and stronger. The tin soldier could already see the bright daylight on in front where the coping ended, but he heard at the same time a roaring sound which might well have made a brave man afraid. Why, only fancy! where the coping ended the gutter plunged right down into a large channel, which would be as dangerous to the tin soldier as sailing down a large waterfall would be to us. And now he was already so close to it that he could not stand. The boat shot out, the wretched tin soldier stood as stiff as he could, nobody

should say of him that he so much as blinked his eyes. The boat whirled round four times, and was filled with water to the very brim. Sink it must! The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water, and deeper and deeper sank the boat; the paper became quite undone; now the water went right over the soldier's head; then he thought of the pretty little dancing girl whom he was never to see again, and these lines rang in the tin soldier's ear:

"March! march! warrior, march!
Death shall be thy portion!"

And now the paper burst in the middle, the soldier fell through, and the same instant was swallowed by a large fish.

Nay! but how dark it was inside there! It was even worse than the gutter-coping; and then it was so narrow too; but the tin soldier was steadfast, and lay at full length shouldering arms.

The fish frisked about; it leaped and darted about in the most frightful manner; at last, however, it grew quite still, and what looked like a flash of lightning went right through it. The light shone quite brightly, and some one cried aloud: "Tin soldier!' The fish had been caught, carried to market, sold and taken to the kitchen, where the maid-servant had cut it up with a large knife. She took the soldier round the waist with her two fingers and carried him into the parlour, whither every one hastened to have a look at so remarkable a man who had travelled all about inside a fish. Yet the tin soldier was not a bit proud. They placed him on the table, and there—how strangely to be sure things do come about in this world!—the tin soldier found himself in the self-same room he had been in before; he saw the self-same children, and the same play-things stood upon the table; the beautiful palace with the pretty

little dancing girl too was there, and she still stood on one leg and held the other in the air; she, too, was steadfast. The tin soldier was quite touched; he could have shed tin tears, but this would not have become him. He looked at her and she looked at him, but neither of them said a word. The same instant one of the little boys took up the tin soldier and threw him right into the stove. He gave no reason whatever for doing so; no doubt the gnome in the snuff-box was at the bottom of it.

The tin soldier stood quite illuminated and felt a frightful heat, but whether it was the actual heat of the fire or the heat of his love he did not know. His bright colours had all faded away, but whether in consequence of his journey or his heartache nobody could say. He looked at the little maid and she looked at him, and he felt in quite a melting mood, but still he stood steadfast and shouldered arms. Then a door opened, the draught caught the dancing girl, and she flew in the form of a sylphide right into the stove to the tin soldier, flashed up into a flame, and was gone; then the tin soldier melted into a mere clot of metal, and when the serving maid next day swept the ashes out of the grate she found him in the shape of a little tin heart. As to the dancing girl, all that remained of her was the spangle, and that was burnt as black as a coal.

THE UGLY DUCKLING.

It was so pretty out in the country. It was summer. The corn stood yellow, the oats green, the hay was stacked in the green meadows, and the stork strode about on his long red legs and chattered Egyptian, for he had learnt that language from his mother. Round about the fields and meadows were large woods, and in the midst of the woods deep pools; yes, it was truly delightful out in the country! In the middle of the sunlight lay an old country-house with deep ditches round about it, and from the walls right down to the water grew large dock-leaves which were so high that little children could stand on tip-toe beneath the biggest; it was lonesome there as in the thickest wood, and here lay a duck upon her nest; she was engaged in hatching her young, but by this time she was nearly tired of the job, it had lasted so long and she seldom received visitors; the other ducks preferred to swim about in the ditches to running up and sitting under a dock-leaf to chat with her.

At last one egg cracked after the other: "Peep! peep!" was

the cry; all the yolks of the eggs had become alive and stuck out their heads.

"Rap! rap!"[1] she cried; and so they all hastened away as quickly as they could and looked all about them beneath the green leaves, and the mother let them look to their heart's content, for green is good for the eyes.

"How big the world is, to be sure!" said the young ducklings, for now indeed they had a little more room to stir about in than when they lay inside the egg.

"Do you fancy that this is the whole world?" said their mother, "why, it stretches far beyond the other side of the garden right into the parson's field; but there I have never been. I suppose the whole lot of you are there, eh?" and she rose up. "No, I haven't got you all out yet! The biggest egg lies there still. How much longer will it last? I am sick and tired of it!" And down she sat again.

"Well, how are things with you?" said an old duck who came to pay her a visit.

"This one egg takes such a time!" said the sitting duck, "no hole will come in it! But just look at the others! They are the prettiest ducklings I have ever seen! They are all just like their father, the wretch! He never comes to see me!"

"Let me see the egg that won't crack!" said the old duck. "Take my word for it, 'tis a turkey egg. I was fooled that way myself once, and the youngsters were a grief and a trouble to me, I can tell you, for they fought shy of the water. I couldn't get them into it anyhow! I snapped and quacked but it was of no

[1] "Quick, quick!"

use. Let me see the egg, I say! Yes, it *is* a turkey egg. Let it lie where it is and go and teach the other children to swim!"

"Nay, but I'll sit on it a little bit longer all the same," said the duck; "if I have sat so long already, I may just as well sit the Zoological Garden regulation time also."

"As you like!" said the old duck, and she waddled off.

At last the big egg burst. "Peep, peep!" said the fledgeling as it rolled out—he was so big and ugly. The duck looked at him. "What a frightfully big duckling it is!" cried she; "none of the others are a bit like him! Surely, it can never be a turkey chick! Well, we shall soon find out about that! Into the water he goes if I have to *kick* him in!"

Next day it was the most glorious weather, the sun shone on all the green dock-leaves. The duck mother with her whole family came right down to the ditch. "Rap! rap!" said she, and one duckling plunged into the water after the other; the water went right over their heads, but up they came again at once and floated so prettily; their legs went of themselves, the whole lot of them were in; even the ugly grey fledgeling swam along with them.

"No, it is no turkey!" said she, "see how nicely it uses its legs, how upright it holds itself! 'Tis my own youngster! Now, really, when you come to look at it, it's quite pretty! Rap! Rap! Come with me now and I will lead you into the great world and present you to the duck-yard, but always keep close to me so that no one may tread upon you; and beware of the cat!"

And so they came into the duck-yard. There was a

frightful noise there, for two families were fighting over an eel's head, and the cat got it after all.

"Look, that is the way of the world!" said the duck-mother, and licked her beak for she would have liked the eel's head herself. "Use your legs," said she, "look smart and nod

your necks at that old duck yonder, for she is the most distinguished person here; she is of Spanish descent; and don't you see she has a red clout round her leg! That is something extraordinarily lovely and the greatest distinction any duck can have; it is as much as to say they don't want to get rid of her,

and men and beasts are to take note thereof! Quick, quack! Don't turn your legs in! A well-brought-up duckling keeps his legs wide apart like father and mother! Look!—So!—And now thrust out your neck and say "Rap!'"

And they did so; but all the other ducks round about looked at them and said quite loudly, "Just look! Now we shall have all that mob too! As if there were not enough of us here already! And oh, fie! what a fright *that* duckling looks! We won't put up with him, anyhow!" And immediately a duck flew at him and bit him in the neck.

"Leave him alone, will you!" said the mother; "he's doing no harm to any one!"

"Yes, but he is too big and queer!" said the duck who had bitten him, "and so he must be snubbed!"

"You have pretty children, mother!" said the old duck with the clout round her leg. "The whole lot of them is pretty except one, which hasn't turned out well at all! I wish you could make him over again!"

"Impossible, your grace!" said the mother of the ducklings; "he is not pretty, but he has a thoroughly good disposition and swims as nicely as any of the others; nay, I may say even a bit better! I fancy he will grow prettier, or perhaps somewhat smaller, in time. He has lain too long in the egg and therefore he has not got the proper shape!" And then she trimmed his neck with her beak and smoothed down the rest of his person. "Besides, he is a drake," she said, "and so it doesn't so much matter! I think he'll be strong enough to fight his way along!"

"The other ducklings are very nice," said the old duck. "Pray

make yourself quite at home, and if you find an eel's head you may bring it to me."

And so they made themselves quite at home.

But the poor duckling who had come out of the egg last of all and looked so ugly, was bitten, thumped, and made fun of both by the ducks and the hens. "He is too big!" they all cried; and the turkey cock, who had been born with spurs, and therefore thought himself an emperor at least, puffed himself out like a ship in full sail, regularly pitched into him, and then gabbled till he was quite red in the face. The poor duckling knew not whither to turn, and was so distressed because he was ugly and the laughing-stock of the whole duck-yard.

Thus it fared with him the first day, and after that things grew worse and worse. The wretched duckling was chivied about by all of them, and even his own brothers and sisters were quite angry with him and kept on saying: "If only the cat would take you, you hideous object!" while his mother said, "Would that you were far, far away!" And the ducks bit him and the hens pecked him, and the wench who gave the animals their food kicked him with her foot.

Then he ran away and flew right over the hedge; the little birds in the bushes were scared and flew into the air. "That is because I am so ugly," said the duckling and closed his eyes, but he ran right away all the same; and so he came to a large fen where the wild ducks dwelt, and there he lay the whole night, he was so weary and sorrowful.

In the morning the wild ducks flew up into the air and saw their new comrade. "What kind of a thing are you?" they asked,

and the duckling turned in every direction and greeted them as well as it could.

"You are intensely ugly!" said the wild ducks; "but it is all the same to us if only you do not marry into the family!" Poor creature! As if he had any idea of marrying! It was enough for him if he might lie in the rushes and drink a little fen water.

There he lay for two whole days, and then there came two wild geese, or rather wild ganders, for they were males; it was not so very long ago since they had come out of the egg, and that was why they were so perky.

"Listen, comrade!" said they; "you are so ugly that we have quite taken a fancy to you. Will you scud about with us and become a bird of passage? Close by here, in another fen, there are some sweet, delightful wild geese, maiden ladies the whole lot of them, who can say, Rap! You'll be able to cut a fine figure there, ugly as you are!"

"Pif! paf!" it sounded the same instant, and the two wild geese fell down dead among the rushes and the water became blood-red. "Pif! paf!" it sounded again, and whole swarms of wild geese flew up out of the rushes, and then there were fresh bangs. It was a great hunt; the hunters lay round about the fen, nay, some even sat up in the branches of the trees which stretched right over the sedges; the blue smoke went like clouds among the dark trees and hung far over the water, and the hunting dogs came splash, splashing through the mire. Reeds and sedges swayed in every direction; it was a terrible moment for the poor duckling, who turned its head round to put it beneath its wing, and the same

instant a frightful big dog stood right in front of it, his tongue hung far out of his mouth and his eyes shone so horribly ugly; he put his snout right against the duckling, showed his sharp teeth—and splash! off he went again without seizing it.

"Oh, heaven be praised!" sighed the duckling. "I am so ugly that even the dog doesn't like to bite me!"

And it lay quite still, but the shot hissed among the sedges and gun after gun cracked and banged away.

It was only when the day was far advanced that all was still again, but the poor duckling dared not get up; it waited for many hours longer before it looked about it, and then it hastened away from the fen as fast as it could; it ran over marsh and meadow and there was such a blast that it could hardly get along.

Towards evening it reached a poor little farm-house; it was so wretched that it could not make up its mind as to which side it would fall, and so it remained standing. The blast blew so fiercely against the duckling that it had to sit on its tail so as not to be blown away, and still the wind grew worse and worse. It then perceived that the door was off its hinges and hung so much awry that it could peep into the room through the crack, and it did so.

Here dwelt an old woman with her cat and her hen, and the cat whom she called Sonny could shoot up his back and purr, he could even sparkle, but you had to stroke his fur the wrong way first; the hen had quite stumpy little legs and was therefore called Chicky-short-leg; it laid good eggs and the old woman loved it as her very child.

Next morning they perceived the strange duckling and the cat began to purr and the hen to cluck.

"Well I never!" said the old woman, and looked all about her, but her eyesight was not very good, so she fancied that the duckling was a fat duck which had gone astray. "Why, this is a rare good find!" said she; "now I can have ducks eggs too. If only I could find a drake! We must try, at any rate."

So the duckling was taken on trial for three weeks, but not a single egg came to light. And the cat was master in that house and the hen was mistress, and they always said: "We and the world!" for they thought that they were half of the whole world, and the best half too. The duckling hinted that another opinion was also admissible, but the hen would not hear of such a thing.

"Can you lay eggs?" she asked.

"No!"

"Then hold your tongue!"

And the cat said: "Can you arch your back, purr and sparkle?"

"No!"

"Then you have no business to have any opinion at all when sensible people are talking."

And the duckling sat in a corner and was quite out of sorts. Then it thought of the fresh air and the sunshine, and was seized with such a strange desire to float upon the water that at last it could not help saying so to the hen.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" asked the hen. "You

have nothing to do, and that's why you have all these fancies. Lay eggs or purr, and they'll go away!"

"But it is so nice to float upon the water!" said the duckling; "so nice to take a header and go right down to the bottom!"

"Oh, most delightful, I am sure!" said the hen. "You're mad, I think! Ask the cat, he's the wisest person I know. If he likes floating on the water or taking headers, I'll say no more. Ask our mistress, the old woman, there is no one in the whole world wiser than she. Do you fancy that *she* has any desire to float on the water and take headers?"

"You don't understand me!" said the duckling.

"If *we* don't understand you, I should like to know who could! You will never be wiser than the cat and the old woman, let alone myself! Don't make a fool of yourself, child, and thank your Maker for all the kindness that has been shown to you. Have you not been admitted into a warm room and into a society from which you can learn something? But you're a wretch and intercourse with you is anything but pleasant. You may take my word for it. I only mean it for your good when I tell you unpleasant truths. 'Tis only one's real friends who talk to one like that! See that you lay eggs and learn to purr or sparkle."

"I think I will go out into the wide world," said the duckling.

"Do so by all means!" said the hen.

And so the duckling went. It floated upon the water, it took headers, but all the other animals looked down upon it because it was so ugly.

And now autumn came. The leaves of the forest grew yellow and brown, the blast caught hold of them and made them dance about, and there was a cold look high up in the sky. The clouds hung heavy with hail and snow-flakes, and on the fence stood the raven and cried, for sheer cold, "Ow! ow!" yes, the very thought of it was enough to make one freeze. The poor duckling had anything but a nice time of it.

One evening the sun went down so gloriously, and forth from the bushes came a whole flock of lovely large birds, the duckling had never seen anything so beautiful, they were quite shining white with long supple necks: they were swans. They uttered such a strange cry, spread out their splendid long wings, and flew away from the cold fields to warmer lands and open lakes. They rose so high, so high, that the ugly little duckling felt quite queer. It turned round in the water like a wheel, stretched its neck after them high up in the air, and uttered such a loud and odd shriek that it was frightened at its own voice. Oh, it absolutely could not forget the beautiful birds, the happy birds, and as soon as it had lost sight of them altogether, it ducked right down to the bottom, and when it came up again it was quite beside itself. It knew not the name of these birds, or whither they were flying, yet it loved them as it had never loved anything before. It envied them not one bit. How could it presume to wish for such loveliness! It would have only been too glad if the ducks had suffered it among them, the poor ugly creature!

And the winter grew so cold, so cold, the duckling had to keep swimming on the water to prevent it from freezing altogether; but every night the hole in which it swam became smaller and smaller;

it froze so that the whole crust of ice crackled again and the duckling had to use its legs continually so that the water might not be quite closed up. At last, however, it grew faint, lay quite still, and froze fast into the ice.

Early in the morning a farmer came along that way, he saw it, went out to it, broke the ice into pieces with the iron heel of his wooden shoe, and brought the duckling home to his wife, and there it was revived.

The children wanted to play with it, but the duckling fancied they meant to hurt it, and in its fright it flew right up into the milkcan so that the milk was splashed all about the room. The woman shrieked and smote her hands together, and then it flew into the trough where the butter was, and then down into the meal barrel and out again, by which time it cut a pretty figure, you may be sure. The woman shrieked and flung the fire-irons at it; the children tumbled over each others' legs in trying to seize it, and laughed and shrieked again; it was a good thing the door was open, and out it rushed into the freshly fallen snow among the bushes, and there it lay as if in a swoon.

But it would really be too heartrending to tell of all the distress and wretchedness it had to put up with that hard winter; it was lying in the marsh among the rushes when the sun again began to shine warmly; the larks were singing, it was beautiful spring-time.

And one day it extended its wings, they had a stronger beat than heretofore and bore it vigorously away; and ere it rightly knew where it was, it found itself in a large garden where the

apple-trees stood in full bloom, where the lilac-flowers gave forth their perfume and hung on the long green branches right down towards the winding ditches. Oh, it was so lovely here, so full of the freshness of spring; and right in front, from out of the thicket, came three beautiful white swans; they made a rushing sound with their wings and floated upon the water. The duckling recognised the splendid creatures and was overcome by a strange melancholy.

"I will fly towards them, the royal birds! and they will peck me to death because I, who am so ugly, dare to approach them; but it is all one to me. Better to be slain by them than to be nipped by the ducks, pecked by the hens, kicked by the wench who looks after the poultry yard, and suffer want in the winter time!" And so it flew out into the water, and swam towards the stately swans, who saw it and came darting towards it with bristling plumes. "Kill me then and have done with me!" cried the poor creature, and it bowed its head down towards the water and awaited its death. But what did it see in the clear water? It saw beneath it its own image, but it was no longer a clumsy, dark grey bird, ugly and clammy, it was itself a swan.

It doesn't matter a bit about being born in a duck-yard when one has lain in a swan's egg.

It felt quite glad when it looked back upon all the distress and oppression it had gone through; just for that very reason it was able to enjoy its good fortune, and all the beauty that was now its portion; and the large swans swam round and round about it and stroked it with their beaks.

Some little children came running into the garden, they threw corn and bread crumbs into the water, and the smallest

of them exclaimed: "There's a new one!" and the other children also shouted, "Yes! a new one has come!" And they clapped their hands and danced about and ran to fetch their father and mother, and bread and cakes were cast into the water, and they all said: "The new one is the prettiest! It is so nice and young!" And the old swans bowed down before it.

It felt so bashful and stuck its head beneath its wings, it did not know what to do with itself. It was almost too happy but not a bit proud, for a good heart is never proud. It thought of how it had formerly been persecuted and despised, and now it heard them all say that it was the loveliest of all lovely birds. And the lilacs bowed their branches down into the water towards it, and the sun shone so nice and warm, and then it swelled out its plumage, raised its slim neck, and cried from the bottom of an exultant heart: "I never dreamed of so much bliss when I was an ugly duckling!"

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL.[1] (1848.)

It was so horribly cold; it was snowing and the evening was growing dark; it was, besides, the last evening in the year, New Year's Eve. In the cold and darkness a poor little girl was going about the streets with bare head and naked feet; yes, she had slippers on when she left the house, I know that; but what was the good of them? they were very big slippers; her mother had worn them last, they were so big that the little girl lost them as she hurried across the street because two carriages were dashing by with such a frightful noise. One of the slippers couldn't be found, and a street boy ran off with the other. He said he could use it as a cradle when he had children of his own.

So the little girl went along on her tiny naked feet, which were red and blue from cold. She was holding a lot of matches in an old apron, and she had a bundle of them in her hands too. Nobody had bought from her the whole day; nobody had given her a farthing; hungry and benumbed, she went along and looked so

[1] Written at the request of publisher Flinch for his almanack. Flinch sent Andersen three pictures, to one of which he was to write a tale. The picture Andersen chose was one of a poor little match girl.

pinched and starved, poor little creature! The snow-flakes kept falling on her long yellow hair, which curled so prettily round her neck, but to *that* sort of prettiness she never gave a thought. Lights were shining out of all the windows, and there was such a nice smell of roast goose in the street (for wasn't it New Year's Eve?), and *that* was what she did think about.

Right in a corner between two houses—one of them stood a little more forward into the street than the other—she cowered down; she had drawn up her little feet beneath her, but she was colder than ever, and go home she dared not; she hadn't sold a single match; she hadn't got a single penny; her father would beat her, and it was so cold at home; they had only the roof above their heads, and the wind piped through it although straw and rags had been stuffed into the biggest gaps. Her little hands were nearly quite dead with cold. Ah! a match might be of some use. If only she might pull one out of the bundle, strike it against the wall and warm her fingers! She drew one out. How it spluttered! how it burned! It was a warm, clear flame just like a little candle when she held her hand round it; it was really a wonderful light. It seemed to the little girl as if she were sitting in front of a large iron stove with bright brass studs and a brass drum; the fire burned so delightfully and warmed so nicely; nay, what was that? The little girl had already begun to stretch out her feet so as to warm them also when—out went the flame. The stove vanished—she was sitting there with a little burnt-out match-stump in her hand.

A fresh match was struck; it burned, it shone, and the spot where the light fell upon the wall became transparent like gauze,

She saw right into the room, where the table stood covered with a shining white cloth with fine porcelain, and the roast goose was steaming there stuffed with prunes and apples; the most splendid thing about it all was that the goose sprang from the dish and skipped along the floor with the knife and fork on its back; right up to the poor little girl it came; then out went the match, and the only thing to be seen was a cold thick wall.

She lit another. Then she was sitting beneath the loveliest Christmas-tree; it was even larger and better decorated than the one she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant's last Christmas; a thousand candles were burning on the green branches, and coloured pictures like those with which they ornament shop-windows looked down upon her. The little girl stretched out both her hands—then the match went out; the many, many Christmas candles went higher and higher; she saw that they were now bright stars; one of them fell and made a long streak of fire in the sky.

"Some one's dying now!" said the little girl, for old grandmamma, who was the only one that had been kind to her, and who was now dead, had said, "When a star falls, a soul is going to God."

Again she struck a match against the wall; it shone all round about, and in the radiance stood the old grandmother, so bright, gentle, and heavenly.

"Grandmother!" cried the little girl; "oh, take me with you! I know you'll be gone when the match goes out—gone just like the warm stove, the roast goose, and the beautiful Christmas-tree," and she hastily struck the whole lot of the matches in the bundle. She wanted to hold her grandmother fast; and the

matches shone with such a radiance that it was brighter than broad daylight. Never before had grandmamma been so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms and they flew to Heaven, where there is no cold, no hunger, no anguish—they were with God.

But in the corner by the house in the cold hour of morning sat the little girl with the red cheeks and a smile about her mouth

—dead, frozen to death on the last evening of the old year. New Year's morn rose upon the little body sitting there with the matches, a large pile of which was half burnt. She had tried to warm herself, they said. Nobody knew what beautiful things she had seen, or in what glory she had gone with the old grandmother into her New Year's joy.

IB AND LITTLE CHRISTINA. (1855).

NEAR to Gudenaa,[1] in Silkeborg Wood, there rises a ridge of land, like a large mound, which is called "The Beam," and below it, towards the west, lay and still lies a little farmhouse with lean lands; the sand shines through the thin rye and barley fields. This was a long while ago. The people who dwelt there did a little farming, and had, besides, three sheep, a pig and two oxen; in short they had plenty if one takes things as one finds them, nay, they could very well have managed to keep a couple of horses too, but they said, as the other farmers round about said, "the horse eats his head off!"—that is to say he eats as much as he earns. Jeppe-Jens farmed his little lot in summer time, and in the winter he was a smart wooden-shoe maker. He had an assistant also, a fellow who knew how to cut out wooden shoes which were both strong, light, and in the fashion; boots and shoes they cut out; this brought in money; one could not call Jeppe-Jens's people poor folks.

Little Ib, a boy of seven, the only child of the house, sat and looked on, chipped away at a peg and chipped his fingers too, but

[1] Guden River.

one day he cut out two pieces of wood so that they looked like small wooden shoes; they were a present, said he, for little Christina the bargeman's little daughter, and she was as nice and as pretty as any gentleman's child; had her clothes been cut to suit her birth and breeding nobody would ever have believed that she was from the peat turf hut on Seis Heath. Over there dwelt her father, who was a widower, and earned a living by conveying logs in his barge from the woods down to Silkeborg's eel-pans, nay, sometimes still further, right up to Randers. He had nobody who could take care of little Christina, who was a year younger than Ib, and so she was nearly always with him on his barge between the ling and the whortleberry bushes; if, however, he had to go right the way up to Randers, why then little Christina was sent over to the Jeppe-Jens's.

Ib and little Christina had a nice time of it in play and earnest; they rooted and dug up the ground, they crawled and they scrambled, and, one day, the pair of them ventured almost to the very top of the "Beam" and a good bit into the wood besides. Once they found snipes' eggs there, and that was a great event.

Ib had never yet been on Seis Hede, had never gone in a barge through the lakes to Gudenaa, but now he was going; he had been invited by the bargeman, and the evening before he followed him home.

On the top of the high stacked faggots in the barge sat the two children early one morning, and ate bread and raspberries. The bargeman and his men punted themselves forward, they went with the stream quickly down the river through lakes which seemed locked in by woods and sedges, but there was always a passage

through, even if the old trees leaned right forward, and the oak trees stretched out their withered branches just as if they had turned up their sleeves and wanted to show their knotty naked arms; old alder trees which the stream had torn from the slope held fast on to the bottom of the stream by the roots, and looked like small woody islands; the lilies rocked to and fro on the water; it was such a beautiful journey—and so they came to the weir where the water rushed through the sluices, that was something for Ib and Christina to look at if you like.

At that time neither town nor manufactory stood there, but only the old eel-rearing establishment with those who looked after it, and they weren't many. The rush of the water through the sluices and the shrieking of the wild ducks were the only constant signs of life there. When all the firewood had been unloaded, Christina's father bought a large bundle of eels and a little slaughtered pig, all of which was packed up together in a basket and placed right behind in the stern of the barge. And now they set off home against stream, but the wind was with them, and when they put up the sail as well it was just the same as if they had two horses tugging in front.

When the barge had got so high up in the wood that they lay off where the man who helped Christina's father to punt had only a short distance to go to get home, he and Christina's father went ashore, but told the children to be sure to keep quiet and be careful, but they didn't do this very long, for they must needs look down into the basket where the eels and the pig were stowed away, and they must needs lift up the pig and hold it, and as they both wanted to hold it they of course dropped it, and it fell right

into the water; there it was drifting away with the stream—how frightful!

Ib sprang ashore and ran along for a little distance, and then, of course, Christina got out too. "Take me with you!" she cried; and soon they were right among the bushes and saw neither the barge nor the river; they ran a little bit further still, and then Christina fell down and began to cry, and Ib picked her up.

"Come with me!" said he; "the house is over there!" but the house was not over there. They went on and on over dry fallen branches which cracked beneath their little feet; now they heard a loud raven—they stood still and listened; now an eagle shrieked, it was a hideous shriek, they were quite frightened, but right before them in the wood grew the loveliest blackberries, a countless multitude; it was so tempting that they felt they must stay there a bit, so they stayed and ate and got quite black about the mouth and cheeks. And now they heard a raven again.

"We shall get whipped for the pig!" said little Christina.

"Let us go to our own home!" said Ib; "it is here in the wood!" And they went; they came to a cart-track, but it did not lead them home; it got dark and they were terrified. The strange stillness around them was broken by the hideous shriek of the large horned owl, or the sounds of birds they did not know; at last they both stood still in a clump of bushes. Christina cried, and Ib cried, and when they had thus cried for some time, they laid them down in the dry leaves and went to sleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when they woke: they were freezing cold, but up on the height, close by, the sun was shining down between the trees, there they might warm themselves and

from thence, so thought Ib, they might see their parents' house; but they were far away from it in quite another part of the wood. They scrambled right up to the top of the height and stood upon a slope by a clear transparent lake; there were whole shoals of fish there shining in the sun's rays; what they saw took them quite by surprise, and close beside was a large bush full of nuts, yes, as many as seven clusters of them; and they plucked, and they cracked, and got out the wee kernels which had begun to form, and then they had another surprise—or shall I call it a fright?—for from among the bushes stepped forth a tall old woman whose face was so brown and whose hair was of a glistening black; the whites of her eyes shone just like a negro's, she had a bundle round her neck and a knobly stick in her hand; she was a gipsy. The children did not understand at first what she said, and she took three big nuts out of her pocket, and the loveliest things lay hidden in each of them—she said they were wishing-nuts.

Ib looked at her, she was so friendly, and so he pulled himself together and asked if he might have the nuts, and the woman gave them to him and plucked a whole lot of them for herself off the bushes. And Ib and Christina gazed with big eyes at the wishing-nuts.

"Is there a cart in it with horses in front?" asked Ib.

"There's a golden carriage with golden horses," said the woman.

"Then give it to me," said little Christina, and Ib gave it to her and the woman tied the nut into her neckerchief.

"Is there inside it just such a nice little neckerchief as Christina has?" asked Ib.

"There are two neckerchiefs," said the woman; "there are fine dresses, stockings, and hats."

"Then I will have that too," said Christina, and little Ib gave her the second nut also; the third was a little black one.

"You may keep that!" said Christina; "and it is a pretty one too!"

"And what's in this?" asked Ib.

"What is the very best thing for you," said the gipsy woman.

And Ib held the nut tight. The woman promised to take them the right way home, and they set out, but quite in the opposite direction to that they ought to have gone, but of course that is no reason why one should accuse her of wanting to steal the children.

In the midst of the wild wood they met the forester Chræn; he knew Ib, and by his help Ib and little Christina got home where the good folks were terribly anxious about them, and they were forgiven though they well deserved a good whipping, first because they had let the pig fall into the water, and next because they had played truant.

Christina went to her home on the heath and Ib remained in the little forest hut; the first thing he did there the same evening was to take out the nut which concealed "the best thing of all," —he laid it between the door and the door hinge, shut the door to, and the nut cracked, but nothing like a kernel was there to be seen, no! it was filled with something like snuff or garden mould; a worm had got into it as they say.

"I might have known as much," thought Ib; "how could

there be room in a little nut for the best thing of all? Christina will get neither fine clothes nor a golden carriage out of her two nuts."

And winter came and the new year came.

And many years passed away. Ib now had to go to the priest, and he lived a long way off. And just then the bargeman came and told Ib's parents one day that little Christina was now going out to service to earn her own bread, and it was a very lucky thing for her that she had got into such good hands and was to be a servant to such worthy folks; just fancy! she was going to the rich innkeeper's over at Herning in the West; she was to make herself handy there, and afterwards, when she had got into the way of things, and was confirmed, they would keep her for good.

And Ib and Christina took leave of each other; sweethearts, folks called them; and she let him know at parting that she still had the two nuts which she got from him when they went astray in the wood, and she said that she had hidden away in her clothes-box the little wooden shoes he had carved out and presented to her when he was a boy. And so they parted.

Ib was confirmed, but he remained in his mother's home for he was a smart wooden-shoe cutter, and he looked after the little farm capitally in the summer-time; his mother had only him left, Ib's father was dead.

Only very seldom, and then through a post-boy or an eel farmer, he heard about Christina. She was getting on very well at the rich innkeeper's, and when she was confirmed she wrote her father a letter with greetings for Ib and his mother; in the letter was a good deal about six new shifts and a pretty frock which

Christina had got from her master and mistress. It was right good news!

And in the spring after that, on a very fine day, there was a knocking at Ib's mother's door, it was the bargeman with Christina; she had a whole day off; she had had the opportunity of going to the village of Them and back, and she took advantage of it. She was very pretty, quite like a young lady, and she had nice clothes, they were well sewn together and they suited her. There she stood in all her finery, and Ib was in his common working clothes. He had absolutely nothing to say for himself; it is true he took her by the hand and held it fast and was delighted to see her, but for the life of him he couldn't find his tongue; but little Christina made up for it, she talked and talked and had such a lot to tell them, and kissed Ib right on the mouth.

"What, don't you know me?" said she, but even when they two were quite alone and he still stood and held her by the hand, all that he could say was: "Why, you've become quite a fine lady, and I look so rumpled! How I have been thinking of you, Christina, and of old times!"

And they went, arm-in-arm, right up "The Beam," and looked across Gudenaa to Seis Heath with the large banks of ling upon it, but Ib said nothing, yet when they parted it was quite clear to him that Christina must be his wife; why, weren't they called sweethearts ever since they were quite little; they were, it seemed to him, a betrothed couple, although neither of them had said as much.

They could only be together now for a few hours longer, for she had to get back to Them, whence, early next morning, the cart

would carry her back westwards. Her father and Ib went along with her as far as Them; it was bright moonlight, and when they got there, and Ib was still holding Christina's hand, he really couldn't let it go. His eyes were so bright, but his words were very few and faint, but every one of them came straight from his heart. "If you haven't become a little too much of a fine lady," said he, "and if you can put up with living in mother's house with me as your husband, why then we two will one day be man and wife, but we can wait a little bit, surely!"

"Yes, let us wait and see how things turn out, Ib," said she, and then she pressed his hand and he kissed her on the mouth. "I am proud of you, Ib!" said Christina, "and I think I love you; but let me think it over."

And so they parted. And Ib told the bargeman that he and Christina were now as good as engaged, and the bargeman gave it as his opinion that it was as he had always thought it should be; and he went home with Ib and slept in the same bed with him and nothing more was said about the engagement.

A year had gone by; two letters had passed between Ib and Christina; "true till death!" they had signed themselves. One day the bargeman came to see Ib; he had a greeting for him from Christina; he had something else to say too, it was hard to say, somehow, but it amounted to this that Christina was getting on very well, better than well in fact, she was a right pretty girl, respected and beloved. The innkeeper's son had been at home on a visit; he had a post at some big place at Copenhagen, at a desk in fact; he appeared to like Christina and she thought him a man after her own heart, her parents had certainly nothing to say

against it, but yet Christina knew very well that Ib thought so much of her, and that rather lay upon her conscience, and she had thought of refusing her chance, said the bargeman.

At first Ib said not a word, but he became as white as a sheet, shook his head a bit, and then said: "Christina must not refuse her chance!"

"Write her a couple of lines to that effect!" said the bargeman.

And Ib did write, but he couldn't put the words together as he wanted to, and he struck out and tore up, but by the morning a letter was ready for little Christina, and here it is:

"I have read the letter which you wrote to your father, and I see that things are going well with you in every way, and that they may be better still. Ask your own heart, Christina, and ponder well what your taking me really means, for I have but little. Don't think of me, or of how I may take it, but think of your own good! You are bound to me by no promise, and if you have given me one in your heart I release you from it. All the joy in the world be upon you, little Christina! God will certainly comfort my heart!

"Always your most loving friend,

"IB."

And the letter was sent off, and Christina got it.

At Martinmas the banns were read from the pulpit for her in the church on the heath, and over at Copenhagen, too, where the bridegroom was, and thither she went with her mistress, as the bridegroom, by reason of much business, could not come all the way over to Jutland. Christina, by arrangement, met her father at the market town of Funder, through which the main road

passes, and which was the nearest place of meeting for him, and there they both took leave of each other. He said a word or two about it to folks he met, but Ib when he heard it said nothing at all; he had become so thoughtful his old mother said, and his thoughts went back to the three nuts which he, as a child, had got from the gipsy woman, and two of which he had given to Christina. They were the wishing nuts. Didn't a gold carriage and horses lie in one of hers, and in the second one the loveliest clothes? It had come to pass, all the promised splendour would now be hers over at royal Copenhagen; it had been fulfilled in her case! but all that Ib had got out of his nut was black mould. "The best thing of all" for him, the gipsy woman had said. Yes, and that was quite true, too; black mould was certainly the best thing for him.

Now he understood what the woman had meant: the black earth, the womb of the grave, that was the best place for him.

And the years passed by, not many years but long ones; the old people at the Inn had died off one after the other; all their wealth, many thousands of rigsdalers went to the son. Well, now Christina could have her gold carriage, and no end of fine clothes.

During the two long years which followed, no letter reached him from Christina, and when his father got one at last, it was anything but written in wealth and happiness. Poor Christina! Neither she nor her husband had known how to be moderate in prosperity, their wealth went as it came, there was no blessing in it, because they did not look for a blessing.

And the ling stood in flower and the ling shrivelled up again;

for many a winter the moon had swept over Seis Heath and over "The Beam" in the shelter of which Ib dwelt. The Springtime sun shone out and Ib put the plough to the land. Then the ploughshare scraped against what he thought was a flint-stone and up to the surface there came what looked like a big black clod, and when Ib took hold of it he saw that it was of metal, and on the spot where the plough had scraped it it shone brightly. It was a large heavy gold bracelet from old heathen times; a heroic funeral mound had been levelled by the plough, and its costly treasures brought to light. Ib showed it to the priest, who told him what a splendid find it was; and from him Ib went to the local magistrate, who informed the authorities at Copenhagen of the fact, and advised Ib to take his treasure trove thither himself.

"You have found in the ground the very best thing you could have found!" said the magistrate.

"The best," thought Ib; "the best thing of all for me—and in the ground too! Then the gipsy woman was right after all, if this really is the best thing."

And Ib went in a smack from Aarhuus to royal Copenhagen; it was like a voyage round the world to him, who had never done more than cross the Gudenaa. And Ib came to Copenhagen.

The value of the gold he had found was paid to him; it was a large sum, 600 rigsdalers. So that was how Ib from Seis Heath came to be wandering about in the huge, bewildering Copenhagen.

One evening (he was to return to Aarhuus with the skipper next day) he lost himself in the streets and went in quite the opposite direction to what he had intended. Ib steered his course

westward and that was right enough, but he did not come out where he should have done. There was not a soul to be seen in the streets. Then a little slip of a girl came out from a poor house; Ib asked her the way; she started, looked up at him, and then he saw that she was crying bitterly. His next question was: what ailed her. She said something he could not quite make out, and as they were both standing right under a lamp and the light fell full upon her face, he felt quite queer, for it was little Christina to the life that he saw, exactly as he remembered her when they were both children together.

And he went with the little girl into the poor house, and up the narrow, worn-down stairs, right up to a tiny, sloping attic, under the roof. The air there was heavy and stuffy, and there was no light at all; right away in the corner there was a sighing and a gasping for breath. Ib lit a match. It was the child's mother who lay upon the wretched bed.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" said Ib. "The little girl got hold of me, but I am a stranger in town here myself. Is there no neighbour or any one I can send for?" And he lifted her head.

It was Christina from Seis Heath.

For years and years her name had not been mentioned in her home up in Jutland; it would have stung Ib to the quick and destroyed his piece of mind. And besides, it was no good report that truth and scandal brought. They said that the riches which her husband had inherited from his parents had made him proud and reckless. He had given up his situation, travelled for six months in foreign lands, come back and made debts and lounged about all the same. The cart had jolted more and more, and at last, it went

over altogether. The hosts of jolly fellows, who had sat so often at his table, said it served him quite right; he had always lived like a fool, said they. His body was found one morning in the canal.

Christina went about more dead than alive. Her youngest child, only a few weeks old, conceived in prosperity, born in adversity, was soon in the grave; and things had come to such a pass with Christina that she lay, sick unto death, and abandoned by all, in a wretched room—a room which she could have very well put up with in her younger days on Seis Heath, but the full wretchedness of which she felt only too keenly, now that she was used to better things. It was her eldest little child, also a little Christina, who suffered need and hunger with her, that had brought Ib up there.

"I am afraid I shall die and leave this wretched child all alone," sighed she; "and then what in the world will become of her?" More she couldn't say.

And Ib managed to light another match, and found a candle, and which burnt up and lit the wretched chamber.

And Ib looked at the little girl and thought of Christina as he had known her in their younger days; for Christina's sake he could well be kind towards this child whom he did not know. The dying woman looked at him, her eyes grew larger and larger—did she recognize him? He didn't know, not a word did he hear her say.

* * * * * * * * * *

'Twas in the woods by the Guden River, near Seis Heath; the air was grey, the ling was bare of blossom, the storms from the west drove the yellow leaves from the woods out upon the river, and right over the heath where stood the hut of grass and turf, strange folks lived there now; but beneath the "beam," in a

sheltered nook, behind tall trees, stood a little house, painted and whitewashed; in the dwelling room a peat fire was burning on the hearth, in the dwelling room there was sunshine which beamed from two child-eyes, the warbling of the lark of Spring-time trilled from her red, laughing mouth as she talked; there was life and liveliness, little Christina was there; she sat upon Ib's knee; Ib was father and mother to her, they (her real father and mother) were both to the child and the man as a dream of the night. Ib sat in his neat, pretty little house, a well-to-do man; the little girl's mother lay in the pauper churchyard in royal Copenhagen.

Ib had money at the bottom of the chest folks said, gold from mould, and he had little Christina into the bargain.

OLI LOCKEYE.[1]

THERE is nobody in the whole world who has so many tales to tell as Oli Lockeye !—he is the one to tell tales if you like !

Towards evening, when the children are sitting so nicely at table or on their little stools, that's the time when Oli Lockeye comes. He comes so silently up stairs, for he goes about in his stockings, he opens the door quite softly and fttt ! he squirts sweet milk into the children's eyes, such a tiny, tiny drop, but always quite enough to prevent them from keeping their eyes open and seeing him. Then he creeps behind them just as quietly and blows softly down their necks, and then their heads grow heavy, yes ! but it does not hurt them a bit, for Oli Lockeye means it most kindly. He only wants to make them quiet, and he knows that they are most quiet when they are in bed ; they *must* be still before he can tell them tales.

Now when the children are fairly asleep, Oli Lockeye sits down on the bed. He is quite a beau. His coat is of silk cloth, but it is impossible to say what colour it is for it shines green, red, and

[1] *Dan.* Ole Luköie. Ole is the short of Olof.

blue according as he turns himself. Beneath each arm he holds an umbrella, one with pictures on it, and this he holds over the good children, and then they dream the most delightful stories all night, and the other with nothing at all upon it, and this he holds over the naughty children, and then they sleep like logs and find when they wake in the morning that they have not dreamed the least bit.

And now we will hear how Oli Lockeye came every evening for a whole week to a little boy called Hjalmar and what he told him. There are seven stories in all, for there are seven days in a week.

Monday.

"Now just listen!" said Oli Lockeye one evening when he had got Hjalmar to bed; "now I am going to smarten up!" and immediately all the flowers in the flower-pots became big trees which stretched their long branches up towards the ceiling and along the walls so that the whole room looked like a most beautiful arbour, and all the branches were full of flowers and every flower was fairer than a rose, smelt so nice, and if you chose to eat it, was sweeter than jam. The fruits glistened like gold and there were buns literally bursting with raisins, was there ever anything like it? But the same instant a frightful wailing was heard in the drawer of the table where Hjalmar's schoolbooks lay.

"Why, what is that?" said Oli Lockeye, and he went towards the table and opened the drawer. It was the slate which was in such tribulation, for a wrong figure had got into the sum so that it couldn't come right; the pencil skipped about and tugged at the piece of string to which it was tied just as if it were a little dog that wanted to help the sum and couldn't! And then, too, there

was a great lamenting inside Hjalmar's copy-book, it was simply horrible to hear! Right down every page stood all the big capital letters, each with a little one by its side, a whole row of them, right the way down. At the top was such a nice copy, and close by it stood other letters who fancied that they looked just like it for Hjalmar had written them, they sprawled about there almost as if they had tumbled over the ruled pencil line which they ought to have stood upon.

"Look! you should hold yourselves so," said the copy; "look, sideways, like that, with a smart swing!"

"Oh! we should like to, so much," said Hjalmar's letters; "only we can't, we are so poorly."

"Then you must have powders," said Oli Lockeye.

"Oh, no!" they cried, and with that they stood so straight and trim that it was a pleasure to look at them.

"No more tales for us to-night!" said Oli Lockeye; "I must put them through their drill now. Right, left; right, left!" And so he drilled the letters, and there they stood as trim and well as any copy could stand; but when Oli Lockeye went away and Hjalmar saw them next morning, they were just as wretched as before.

Tuesday.

As soon as Hjalmar was in bed, Oli Lockeye touched all the furniture in the room with his magic squirt and immediately they began to chatter, and the whole lot of them chattered about themselves except the spittoon, which stood silent and was much annoyed that they should be so vain as to talk of nothing but themselves, and to think of nothing but themselves, without giving a single

thought to him who stood so modestly in the corner there and let people spit upon him.

Over the chest of drawers hung a large picture in a gilded frame—it was a landscape; you saw there tall old trees, flowers in the grass, a great sheet of water with a river which ran round by a wood, past many castles, far out into the wide sea. Oli Lockeye touched this picture with his magic squirt and thereupon the birds in it began to sing, the branches of the trees moved, and the clouds regularly flew; you could see their shadows right across the landscape.

And now Oli Lockeye lifted little Hjalmar up towards the frame, and Hjalmar put his legs into the painting, right in the middle of the tall grass. There he stood. The sun shone down upon him from among the branches of the trees. He ran to the water, and got into a little boat which lay there. It was painted red and white, the sails shone like silver, and six swans, all with gold crowns which reached right down their necks and a radiant blue star on their heads, drew the boat past the green woods, where the trees told about robbers and witches, and the flowers told about the pretty little elves and what the butterfly had told them. The loveliest fishes, with scales like gold and silver, swam after the boat. From time to time they took leaps till the water splashed again, and the birds, red and blue, small and great, flew after him in two long rows; the midges danced, and the cockchafers said, "Bum, bum, bum!" They all wanted to follow Hjalmar, and every one of them had a tale to tell.

That was something like a sail! Sometimes the forests were so dark and close together, sometimes they were like the most

beautiful gardens, full of sunshine and flowers, where lay huge castles of marble and crystal. On the balconies stood princesses, and they were all little girls whom Hjalmar knew very well, for he had played with them before. They stretched out their hands, and

every one of them had the nicest sugar-pig that any cake-shop woman can sell, and Hjalmar always took hold of one end of the sugar-pig as he passed by, and the princess held on fast and he did too, and so each of them got a piece, she the smallest, but Hjalmar

much the biggest. At every castle little princes stood on guard; they shouldered their gold sabres and made it rain raisins and tin-soldiers. They were something like princes!

And sometimes Hjalmar sailed through woods and sometimes through vast halls or in the midst of cities, and so he also sailed through the city where his nurse had lived, she who had carried him about when he was quite a little boy and had been so fond of him, and she nodded and beckoned and sang the pretty verses which she herself had composed and sent to Hjalmar:

"My own, my little Hjalmar, dear,
I think so oft of thee!
I've kissed thy brow, thy cheeks so red,
Thy mouth so fresh and wee.

"I heard thee lisp thy baby words,
I needs must go away;
May God, who sent thee from His Heaven,
Be here on earth thy stay!"

And all the little birds sang too, and the flowers danced on their stalks, and the old trees nodded just as if Oli Lockeye were telling them tales too.

Wednesday.

How the rain was pouring down outside! Hjalmar could hear it in his sleep, and when Oli Lockeye opened the window the water was right up to the window-frame. There was a whole lake outside, but the most gorgeous ship lay alongside the house.

"Will you have a sail with me, little Hjalmar?" asked Oli Lockeye; "if so, you can go to-night to foreign lands and be back again in the morning!"

And suddenly Hjalmar was standing, dressed in his Sunday

clothes, in the middle of the gorgeous ship, and the weather immediately became fine, and they sailed through the streets, cruised round the church, and everything was now a large wild sea. They sailed so far that no more land was to be seen anywhere, and they saw a flock of storks; they also were coming from home and on their way to the warm lands. One stork flew right behind the other, and they had already flown far, oh, so far. One of them was so tired that his wings were scarcely able to bear him any longer; he was quite the last of the row, and soon he fell a great distance behind. Finally he sank down lower and lower with outstretched wings, he took a couple of strokes more with his wings, but it was of no use. And now his feet touched the rigging of the ship, now he glided down the sail, and plump! there he stood upon the deck. Then the sailor boy took hold of him and put him in the fowl-coop where all the ducks, hens, and turkeys were assembled. The poor stork stood in the midst of them all quite crestfallen.

"Such a fright!" said all the hens. And the turkey-cock puffed himself out as big as he could and asked who he was, and the ducks waddled backwards and forwards and nudged each other and said, "Quick, quack! quick, quack!"

And the stork told them about hot Africa and the pyramids and about the ostrich who runs like a wild horse over the desert; but the ducks did not understand what he said, so they nudged each other and said, "We're all agreed, are we not, that he is stupid?"

"Yes, he certainly is stupid!" said the peahen, and so it began to cackle aloud. Then the stork held its tongue altogether and thought of Africa.

"Those long thin legs of yours are rather niceish," said the turkey-cock; "how much do they cost now per ell?"

"Quack, quack, quack!" grinned all the ducks together, but the stork pretended that he had heard nothing.

"You can laugh too if you like!" said the turkey to him, "for you don't hear wit like that every day—or perhaps it was too *low* for him? Ak! Ak! He hasn't two ideas, I see! Let us be interesting to ourselves and leave him out of it!" And the hens clucked and the ducks quacked. "Quick, quack! Quick, quack!" It was really frightful how funny they thought it. But Hjalmar went to the hens' house, opened the door, called the stork, and it hopped out on to the roof to him. It had rested now, and it was as though it nodded to Hjalmar to thank him. Then it spread out its wings and flew to the warm lands, but the hens clucked, the ducks quacked, and the turkey-cock grew quite red in the face.

"To-morrow we shall make soup of you," said little Hjalmar, and then he awoke and found himself lying in his little bed What a wondrous journey it was that Oli Lockeye had let him take that night!

Thursday,

"Do you know what I've got?" said Oli Lockeye. "Don't be frightened, and you shall see a little mouse," and he held his hand with the pretty fragile little creature in it towards him. "It has come to invite you to a wedding. There are two little mice who will enter into wedlock this very night. They dwell under the floor of your mother's cupboard; it will be such a nice affair."

"But how can I get through the little mousehole in the floor?" asked Hjalmar.

"Leave that to me," said Oli Lockeye. "I'll take care to make you small enough," and with his magic squirt he touched Hjalmar, who immediately became smaller and smaller till he was no larger than your finger. "Now you can borrow the tin-soldier's clothes, I think they will fit, and a uniform looks so smart in society."

"So it does," said Hjalmar, and in a moment he was dressed like the neatest of tin-soldiers.

"If you will only be good enough to get into your mother's thimble," said the little mouse, "I will have the honour of drawing you."

"But, gracious me, I don't want to give you all that inconvenience, miss!" said Hjalmar, but he got in all the same, and away they went to the mouse's wedding.

First they went under the floor into a long passage, which was just high enough and no more for them to drive along in a thimble, and the whole passage was illuminated by touchwood.

"Doesn't it smell nice here?" said the mouse who drew him; "the whole passage has been smeared with bacon-rind; can you imagine anything more lovely?"

And now they entered the bride-chamber. On the right stood all the wee she-mice, and they whispered and tittered just as if they were making fun of each other; on the left stood all the he-mice and stroked their whiskers with their paws, but in the middle of the floor was to be seen the bridal pair. They stood in a hollowed cheese-rind and kissed each other tremendously in the presence of all, for were they not betrothed and about to be married straight off?

Strangers kept on pouring in, the mice very nearly trod each

other to death, and the bridal pair had stuck themselves right in the middle of the doorway so that there was no getting either out or in. The whole room, like the passage, was smeared with bacon-rind—that was the whole banquet; but, by way of dessert, a pea was exhibited, in which a little mouse of good family had bitten the bride and bridegroom's names, or, rather, their monograms; it was something quite extraordinary.

All the mice said that it was a pretty wedding and that the conversation had been so good.

And so Hjalmar drove home again; he had certainly been in distinguished society, but he had to creep within himself, make himself small and put on the uniform of a tin soldier.

Friday.

"It is really incredible what a number of elderly people there are who would so very much like to get hold of me," said Oli Lockeye, "especially they who have done something wrong." "Good little Oli!" they say to me, "we cannot get our eyes to close, and so we lie the whole night and see all our evil deeds, which, like hideous little gnomes sit on the corners of the bed and squirt us all over with hot water. Won't you come and chase them away so that we may have a good sleep?" And then they sigh so deeply. "We'll pay, handsomely of course! Good night, Oli; the money lies on the window-sill." "But I don't do it for money," said Oli Lockeye.

"But what shall we have for to-night?" asked Hjalmar.

"Well, I don't know whether you would like to go to a wedding to-night too; it is quite another sort to yesterday's, let me tell you. Your sister's big doll—the one I mean who looks like

a man and is called Herman—is to be married to the doll Bertha, and it is her birthday besides, so there will be a good many presents."

"Yes, I know that well enough," said Hjalmar; "whenever the dolls get new clothes my sister lets them keep a birthday or have a wedding. It has happened a hundred times."

"Yes, but to-night the wedding is the hundred and first time, and when 101 is over there's an end to it all. So this wedding will be quite exceptionable. Only look, now!"

And Hjalmar looked towards the table. A little dolls' house stood there with lights in the windows, and all the tin-soldiers presented arms outside. The bridal pair were sitting on the floor and leaning against the table legs; they were quite pensive, and no doubt had good reasons for it. But Oli Lockeye put on grandmamma's black dress and married them. When the ceremony was over, all the furniture in the room joined in the following song, which had been written by the lead pencil; it was to the same tune as the devil's tattoo—

"Our song shall come in like the wind,
The bride and groom at home to find.
They strut as spruce as any pin,
And both are made of good glove skin.
Hurra! hurra! for pin and leather:
We'll sing aloud in wind and weather!" [1]

[1] Incomparably the best translation of these difficult nonsense lines is Mrs. Howitt's, which runs thus:—

"Our song like a wind comes flitting
Into the room where the bride folks are sitting:
They are partly of wood as is befitting
Their skin is the skin of a glove well fitting,
Hurrah! hurrah! for sitting and fitting!
Thus sing we aloud as the wind comes flitting!"

Then came the presents, but they had declined beforehand all eatables; their love for each other was food enough for them.

"And now shall we remain in the country or go abroad?" asked the bridegroom; so the swallow, who had travelled a good bit, and the old farmyard hen, who had hatched six broods of chickens were consulted in the matter. And the swallow told them about the beautiful warm lands where the grapes hung so large and heavy, where the air was so mild and the mountains had colours the like of which were quite unknown here.

"But you haven't got our green cabbage," said the hen. "I took change of air in the country, one summer, with all my chickens; there was a gravel-pit where we could go and scrape, and in that way we had access to a garden of green cabbage. Oh, how green it was! I cannot imagine anything finer."

"But one cabbage looks very much like another," said the swallow, "and the weather is often so very bad here."

"Yes, but one is used to it," said the hen.

"But it is so cold here, it freezes."

"Yes, but that does the cabbage good," said the hen. "Besides, we also have it warm enough sometimes. Why, only four years ago, didn't we have a summer which actually lasted five weeks, and it was so hot that there was not a breath of air! And then we haven't all the venomous beasts they have abroad and are free from bandits besides. Whoever does not think our country the finest of all is a wretch who does not deserve to live here! Yes," cried the hen, "I also have travelled. I have ridden in a cask for more than twelve miles and can assure you there is no pleasure at all in travelling."

"Yes, the hen is a sensible woman," said Bertha the doll. "I too don't care about travelling up mountains; first it's up and then it's down and that's all! No, we'll go and live near the gravel-pit and walk in the cabbage garden."

And so it was settled.

Saturday.

"Shall I have some stories now?" said little Hjalmar as soon as Oli Lockeye had got him to bed.

"We have no time for that this evening," said Oli, and he spread his *beautiful* umbrella above him. "Look at those Chinese now," and the whole umbrella looked like a large Chinese saucer with blue trees and arched bridges with little Chinese upon them who stood and wagged their heads. "We must have the whole world tidied up for to-morrow," said Oli, "for it is a holy day; remember, it is Sunday. I must be off to the church-tower to see if the little nixies have polished the bells so that they may sound nicely; I must be off to the fields to see if the wind has blown the dust off the grass and leaves, and, hardest work of all, I must have all the stars down to furbish them up a bit. I take them in my apron, but, first of all, every one of them has to be ticketed, and the holes from which they hang, up above there, must also be ticketed, so that they may come into their right places again, or else they wont sit firm and we shall have such a lot of falling stars, for they'll be sure to flop down one after the other!"

"Now, I tell you what it is, Mr. Lockeye," said an old portrait, which hung on the wall of the room where Hjalmar slept, "I

am Hjalmar's great grandfather. You may tell Hjalmar tales if you like, and you shall have our best thanks for it, but pray do not confuse his ideas! The stars cannot be taken down and polished. The stars are globes just like our own earth and that's the best of them!"

"I am very much obliged to you, you old great grandfather!" said Oli Lockeye; "I am very much obliged to you I'm sure! You are the head of the family, I know very well. You are *the* Old Head I am well aware. But I am older than you. I am an old heathen. The Romans and the Greeks called me the God of Dreams. I have been in the best houses, and go there still. I know how to behave both to small and to great. Now you can tell your own tales if you like!"—so off went Oli Lockeye and took his umbrella with him.

"Why, nowadays, one cannot even express one's opinion!" said the old portrait.

And so Hjalmar awoke.

Sunday.

"Good evening!" said Oli Lockeye, and Hjalmar nodded, but at the same time started up and turned the portrait of the old great grandfather with its face towards the wall so that it should not join in the talk as it had done the day before.

"Now you must tell me stories. You must tell me about the five green peas who lived in a pea pod, and about Cock-bone who went courting Hen-bone, and about the darning needle who thought herself fine enough to be a sewing needle."

"Yes, but one may have too much of a good thing, you know,"

said Oli Lockeye, "I prefer to show you something. I tell you what, I'll show you my brother. He too is called Oli Lockeye, but he never comes to any one more than once, and when he comes he takes them with him on his horse and tells them tales; he has only two to tell, one is so matchlessly lovely that no one in the world can imagine anything like it, and the other is so ugly and horrible—well, there is no describing it!" And so Oli Lockeye lifted little Hjalmar up to the window and said, "There you shall see my brother, the other Oli Lockeye. They also call him Death! See, he does not look at all as ugly as the picture books make him, where he is nothing but bones and knuckles, no! That is silver lace that he has on his jacket; he wears the loveliest hussar uniform, a cape of black velvet sweeps behind him right over the horse. Look, how he rides at full gallop!

And Hjalmar saw how the other Oli Lockeye was riding along and taking both old and young up on his horse; some he put in front and some behind, but he always asked them this question first: "How about the entries in your character-book?" And they all replied, "Oh, very good!" "Ah, but let me see for myself!" said he, and then they were obliged to show him the book, and all who had "Very good" or "Remarkably good" noted in it were put in front of the horse and told the loveliest tales; but those who had "Pretty good" or "Middling" recorded in their books had to sit behind and hear hideous tales. They shook and wept, and would have sprung off the horse if they could, but this they couldn't do at all, for they were as if fast glued to it.

"Why Death is the loveliest Oli Lockeye after all!" said little Hjalmar. "I am not a bit afraid of him!"

"Nor ought you to be either," said Oli Lockeye; "only take care that you have a good character-book."

"Yes, now that *is* improving," mumbled the great grandfather's portrait. "It *is* of some use expressing one's opinion after all!" and so he too was satisfied.

That, now, is the story of Oli Lockeye, and he himself may come any evening and tell you something more.

DANISH HOLGER (1847).

THERE is in Denmark an old castle called Kronborg which lies right out in the Sound where the large ships sail by every day in hundreds, both English ships, and Russian and Prussian, and they salute the old castle with their cannons: "Boom!" and the castle replies again with its cannons: "Boom!"—for that is how the cannons say: "Good-day!" "Many thanks!" In the winter time no ship sails there, for then it is all covered with ice right across to the Swedish coast; it is exactly like a great highway, and there waves the Swedish flag and there the Danish, and the Danish and the Swedish people say to each other: "Good-day!" "Many thanks!" But not with cannons; no, with a friendly shake of the hand; and each fetches wheaten bread and biscuits from the other, for strange meat always tastes the sweetest. But the glory of the whole thing is, after all, the old Kronborg, and beneath the Kronborg it is that Danish Holger sits in the deep dark dungeon whither nobody ever goes; he is clad in iron and steel and rests his head upon his strong arms; his long beard hangs down over the marble table to which it has grown fast; he sleeps and dreams, but in his dreams he

sees everything which is going on up in Denmark. Every Christmas Eve one of God's angels comes and tells him that what he has dreamt is right, and that he can go to sleep again, for Denmark is not yet in any real danger; but should the danger come—well, then old Danish Holger will arise so that the table bursts when he pulls his beard towards him, and then he will come forth and smite so that all the countries in the world shall hear him.

It was an old grandfather who said all this about Danish Holger, and he told it to his little grandson, and the little boy knew that what his grandfather said was true. And while the old grandfather sat and told the story, he carved away at a big wooden figure; it was to represent Danish Holger, and was to be put in front of a ship; for the old grandfather was a carver of figures, and it is such men as he who carve out the figure-heads of ships according to the names they have; and here he had carved out Danish Holger, who stood so straight and proud with his long beard, and held in one hand the huge broadsword, but rested his other hand on the Danish coat-of-arms.

And the old grandfather told so much about remarkable Danish men and women till at last the little grandson thought to himself that now he knew as much as Danish Holger could know, who, after all, only dreamt about it; and when the little fellow went to bed, he thought so much about it that he regularly squeezed his chin into the feather-bed and fancied he had a long beard which had grown fast into it.

But the old grandfather remained sitting at his work and carved away at the last part of it—it was the Danish coat-of-arms. And now he had finished it, and he looked at it as a whole, and he

thought of all he had read and heard and what he had told the little boy in the afternoon; and he nodded his head and wiped his spectacles, put them on again and said, "Yes, Danish Holger certainly won't come in my time, but the lad in the bed yonder may perhaps catch sight of him and be one of them when the time comes." And the old grandfather nodded, and the more he looked at his Danish Holger, the plainer it became to him that it was a good figure which he had made there; it really seemed to him as if it quite took a colour, and that the harness shone like iron and steel; the hearts in the Danish shield grew redder and redder and the lions sprang about with their golden crowns.

"It really is the loveliest coat-of-arms in the whole world!" said the old man; "the lions signify strength, and the hearts are gentleness and love!" And he looked at the topmost lion and thought of King Canute who bound great England to Denmark's royal chair; and he looked at the second lion and thought of Waldemar who assembled Denmark and subdued the land of the Wends; he looked at the third lion and thought of Margaret who united Denmark, Norway and Sweden; but as he looked at the red hearts they shone still stronger than before—they actually became flames which moved to and fro, and his thoughts followed them all.

The first flame led him into a narrow dark dungeon. There sat a captive, a lovely lady, Christian IV.'s daughter, Eleonora Ulfeldt, and the flame lighted like a rose upon her bosom and blossomed together with the heart of her who was the best and noblest of Danish women.

"Yes, that is indeed a heart in the arms of Denmark!" said the old grandfather.

And his thoughts followed the flame which led him out upon the sea where the cannons roared, and the ships lay wrapped in smoke; and the flame fastened itself as the ribbon of an order on *Hvitfeld's* breast as to save his fleet he blew his ship into the air.

And the third flame led him to Greenland's wretched huts, where the priest Egede stood with words and deeds of Love; the flame was a star upon his breast, a heart in the Danish coat-of-arms.

And the old grandfather's thoughts anticipated the flickering flame, for his thoughts knew whither the flame would go. In the peasant-woman's humble room stood Frederick VI., and wrote his name with chalk upon the beams; the flame quivered on his breast, quivered in his heart; in the peasant's hut his heart became a heart in Denmark's shield. And the old grandfather dried his eyes, for he had known and lived for King Frederick with the silvery white hair and the honest blue eyes, and he folded his hands and gazed silently in front of him. Then came the old grandfather's grandson and said that now it was late it was time for him to rest, and the supper-table was spread.

"But I must say you have turned out a lovely piece of work there, grandfather!" said he; "Danish Holger and the whole of our good old coat-of-arms! It seems to me exactly as if I had seen that face before!"

"Nay, that I am sure you have not!" said the old grandfather; "but I have seen it and I have tried to carve it out in wood just as I remember it. That was the time when the English lay in the Roads, on the Danish 2nd of April, when we showed ourselves Danes of the good old sort. On board the *Denmark* where I stood, in Steen Bille's squadron, I had a certain man by my side; it seemed

as if the bullets were afraid of him, he kept on singing old songs right lustily and fought and fired as if he were more than man. I remember his face still; but whence he came or whither he went I know not, nor any one else either. I have often thought that perhaps it was old Danish Holger himself who had swam down from the Kronborg to help us in the hour of danger; that at any rate was what I thought, and there stands his image!"

And it cast its big shadow right along the wall close up to the ceiling; it looked as if it were actually Danish Holger himself who was standing behind the shadow moved about so, but perhaps this may only have been because the candle flame did not burn very steadily. And the daughter-in-law kissed the old grandfather and led him towards the big arm-chair in front of the table, and she and her husband, who was, of course, the old grandfather's son, and the father of the little boy who lay in the bed, sat and ate their evening meal together, and the old grandfather talked about the Danish lions and the Danish hearts, about strength and sweetness, and he declared quite plainly that there was another strength besides the strength which lay in the sword, and he pointed at the shelves where lay the old books, where all Hollerg's comedies lay, these books which were read so often because they were so amusing, and one regularly seemed to know all the persons in them who used to live in the good old days long ago.

"Look now! he knew how to slash too," said the old grandfather, "he slashed off all the follies and odd corners of people as far as he could reach!" And the old grandfather nodded towards the mirror where the Almanack stood with the picture of the "Round Tower" on it, and then he said: "Tycho Brahe, too, was one of those

who used the sword ; not to hack at flesh and bones, but to hew out a plainer way up among the stars of Heaven. And then he, too, whose father was of my own class, the old mason's son, he whom we ourselves have seen with the white hair and the strong shoulders, whose name is known to all the countries of the world ! Yes, he could carve, I can only chip ! Yes, Danish Holger can manage in many ways to make Denmark's might known to all the world. Let us drink Bertel's health."

But the little boy plainly saw the Sound and the old Kronborg, and the real Danish Holger sitting deep down beneath it, with his beard grown fast to the marble table and dreaming of everything that was going on in the world above ; and Danish Holger was also dreaming of the poor little room where the mason was sitting, he heard everything they were talking about, and nodded in his dreams and said :

"Yes, yes ! ye have only got to remember me, ye Danish folks ! Bear me in mind and I'll come in the hour of need ! "

And outside the Kronborg the bright day was shining and the wind bore the notes of the hunter's horn over from the neighbouring land of Sweden, and the ships sailed by and gave their greetings : "Boom ! boom ! " and the Kronborg sent back an answer, "Boom ! boom ! " But Danish Holger awoke not, however loudly they fired, for what did it all amount to but : "Good day ! " "Many thanks ! " It must be a very different sort of shooting before he will awake ; but awake he will, for there's backbone in Danish Holger.

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